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A COMPANION TO MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE



Edited by

GARY FERGUSON & MARY B. MCKINLEY

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A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre

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The essays by Isabelle Garnier with Isabelle Pantin, Jean-Marie Le Gall, and Olivier Millet were translated from French by Marian Rothstein and Gary Ferguson.

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INTRODUCTION

Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley

The woman who would play such an important role in French religious reform and literary life was born at the château of Cognac near Angoulême on 11 April 1492, the first child of Louise de Savoie and Charles, Count of Angoulême. A son, François, was born two years later, on 12 September 1494. Much of Marguerite's later prominence and influence arose because she was François's sister; at the time of his birth, however, it was not at all evident that he would one day become king of France. Their father was a distant relative of Charles VIII, and Cognac was far from the center of royal power. However, when the king's only son died in December 1495, Louis, Duke of Orléans, Charles d'Angoulême's cousin, stood to inherit the throne. In the absence of a male heir to Louis, Charles d'Angoulême became the second in line to the throne, and when Charles died on 1 January 1496, his son François took that place. Louis obtained legal guardianship of Marguerite and François, allowing Louise to retain custody of her children. When Charles VIII died childless in 1498, Louis became King Louis XII. He designated François heir presumptive to the throne and brought François, Marguerite, and their mother to court. Louis appointed as their guardian Pierre de Rohan, seigneur de Gié, and arranged for them to live first at the château of Blois and then at Amboise.¹

Louise fiercely guarded her right to remain with her children and to oversee their education. Throughout her life, she showed a strong disposition toward spirituality and religious devotion, a commitment that she endeavored to pass on to her children. She engaged François de Moulins (or Desmoulins/Du Moulin) de Rochefort, a Franciscan humanist

¹ The standard biography of Marguerite remains Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978). Jonathan A. Reid's *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, 2009) follows Marguerite's engagement in evangelical reform and her role as patron and protector of individuals in that movement. Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian's *Marguerite de Navarre, Mother of the Renaissance* (New York, 2006) draws from Marguerite's own writings clues to events in her life. Robert J. Knecht's *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge, Eng., 1994) provides historical detail often relevant to Marguerite.

cleric, disciple of Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples, to be her son's preceptor. Moulins remained a close advisor to the family. Jean d'Angoulême, Marguerite's paternal grandfather, had gathered a rich and varied collection of books for his library at Cognac, and those books were moved to the library at Blois. Louise added to their number by hiring a scribe and an artist, Robinet Testart, and ordering manuscripts. Marguerite appears to have shared in much of her brother's education.²

With Louis XII's accession to the throne, Marguerite, as the sister of the young heir presumptive, became a valuable pawn in the negotiation of royal marriages. Nonetheless, her position, like that of her brother, was tenuous, because the possibility remained that Louis and his wife, Anne de Bretagne, would produce a male child and the Angoulême threesome would return to the shadows. Louis endeavored to use Marguerite to strengthen his relations with Tudor England, working first toward a marriage with Arthur, Prince of Wales, son of King Henry VII. When Arthur died in 1502, Louis turned his efforts toward Arthur's younger brother, the future Henry VIII, again with no success. In 1505, it was King Henry VII's turn to raise the question of marriage between his son and Marguerite, but by then it had been decided that the sister of the heir to the French throne should remain in France. On 2 December 1509, in a match calculated by Louis to strengthen the royal dynasty, Marguerite, at age 17, married Charles d'Alençon.³

Louis XII died on 31 December 1514, and François became king of France on 1 January 1515. Having appointed his mother as regent, he left in July, accompanied by Charles d'Alençon, to lead the French invasion of Italy in an effort to claim the duchy of Milan. The French victory at Marignano in September established François's reputation as a military leader and marked a brilliant beginning to his reign. Louise, Marguerite, and Queen Claude traveled south to welcome the returning hero. While staying in Arles, Louise and Marguerite became aware of efforts to reform the abbey

² Jourda lists many titles that were available in the library at Blois (*Marguerite*, 119–30). On Louise's purchases of manuscripts, see Mary Beth Winn, "Books for a Princess and her Son: Louise de Savoie, François d'Angoulême, and the Parisian Libraire Antoine Vérard," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 46 (1984), 603–17.

³ See Jourda, *Marguerite*, 112–17 and Laurent Ripart, "Les mariages de Marguerite," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992: Actes du Colloque international de Pau, 1992*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan, 1995), pp. 59–83. Ripart rejects Jourda's explanation that the marriage was simply a solution that settled a territorial dispute between the Alençons and the Angoulêmes. He argues that Louis wanted to strengthen the monarchy by bringing the Alençon line into the royal orbit. Marguerite was the "hinge" that effected that consolidation (pp. 64–65).

of Hyères, efforts that were meeting with strong resistance. In response to appeals from the community's superiors, Marguerite intervened on behalf of the advocates of reform.⁴ In so doing, she continued a family tradition of concern for men and women in religious life. She was one of several women in the extended royal family, including her mother-in-law Marguerite de Lorraine, to labor for the good of monastic communities throughout their lives.⁵ Several stories in the *Heptaméron* dramatize the need for such initiatives and portray Marguerite intervening on behalf of victims of corruption in monasteries and convents.

Leaving Arles, Marguerite, Louise, and Claude traveled to Saint-Maximin, the church east of Marseille said to house the relics of Mary Magdalene. Devotion to that saint as a repentant sinner and disciple of Christ was extremely popular in the later Middle Ages. In gratitude for François's victory, the royal women fulfilled a vow to make a pilgrimage to la Sainte-Baume, the shrine in the hills near Saint-Maximin where, it was believed, Mary Magdalene had lived in a cave at the end of her life. After a reunion with François marked by triumphant ceremonies in Marseille, the royal party returned to Saint-Maximin on 20 January 1516 and to la Sainte-Baume the next day, making generous gifts to support the shrine.⁶ Doubts about the cult of Mary Magdalene had begun to arise in France. The appearance of several women named Mary in the New Testament had led to confusion about their identity, pious tradition having made them into a single person. Following her visit to Saint-Maximin, Louise commissioned François de Moulins to write a life of Mary Magdalene. The king's former tutor apparently consulted with Lefèvre d'Étaples, the revered humanist and biblical scholar. Lefèvre responded in 1517 with his *De Maria Magdalena et triduo Christi disceptatio*, challenging the traditional devotion and arguing that it had conflated three different women.⁷

⁴ Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:48, 55–57.

⁵ Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Les Moines au temps des Réformes, France (1480–1560)* (Seyssel, 2001), pp. 56–60.

⁶ Sheila M. Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Three Maries Debates* (Geneva, 2009), pp. 36–48. See also François Rigolot, "The *Heptameron* and the 'Magdalen Controversy': Dialogue and Humanist Hermeneutics," in *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptameron and Early Modern Culture*, ed. John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 218–31 and "Magdalen's Skull: Allegory and Iconography in *Heptameron* 32," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994), 57–73.

⁷ On Lefèvre's life and career, see Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*; Guy Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'intelligence des Écritures* (Geneva, 1976); and Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Lefèvre: Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France* (Grand Rapids, 1984). Cf. Jean-Pierre Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France* (Paris, 1974).

Sometime around 1520, Lefèvre became the unofficial leader of a group of people working for religious reform. They never constituted a formal body, nor did they promulgate a new doctrine. They argued that the gospel, *l'évangile*, was and should be recognized as the founding and enduring authority of the Church. They struggled to reform that body without dividing it, seizing opportunities where they could to advance their cause. Marguerite became the group's intermediary to the royal court where, over the next decade, she procured appointments for some of its members, invited them to preach sermons, and, when necessary, called for royal intervention to protect them. The group in Paris included some, like Gérard Roussel, who would remain a member of the Catholic clergy, and others, like Guillaume Farel, Lefèvre's student, who would leave France, reject the Roman hierarchy, and work to establish the Reformed Church in Geneva. In 1517, Martin Luther had affixed to the door of Wittenburg cathedral his 95 theses protesting ecclesiastical abuses, including the sale of indulgences. In 1521, the Faculty of Theology in Paris, known as the Sorbonne, condemned Luther's ideas as heretical. In that same year, Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux, invited Lefèvre and his followers to preach there. Thus was born the "Meaux group," that would promote evangelical renewal throughout the kingdom and draw accusations of heresy from the conservative theologians of the Sorbonne and the Parlement of Paris.⁸

In those early years of François's reign, Marguerite was a regular member of her brother's inner circle. In 1517, François gave her the duchy of Berry and appointed her to the ducal peerage, a status otherwise reserved to men.⁹ In 1520, she accompanied François to the historic meeting with England's Henry VIII, known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Letters from Italian and English ambassadors refer to her as an influential figure whose favor they courted. The close relationship of trust and power evident within the trio of François, Louise, and Marguerite is reflected in their frequent representation as the Royal Trinity. Court poet Jean Marot referred to them as "un seul cueur en troys corps."¹⁰

⁸ Reid, *King's Sister*, ch. 5, 1:151–80; Henry Heller, "Marguerite of Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33 (1971), 271–310; and James K. Farge, "Marguerite de Navarre, Her Circle, and the Censors of Paris," in *International Colloquium Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Régine Reynolds-Cornell (Birmingham, Ala., 1995), pp. 15–28.

⁹ Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre* (Aldershot, Eng. and Burlington, Vt., 2004).

¹⁰ Reid, *King's Sister*, 1:85–102; Richard Cooper, *Litterae in tempore belli: Étude sur les relations littéraires italo-françaises pendant les guerres d'Italie* (Geneva, 1997), ch. 10, pp.

It is not clear exactly when Marguerite began to write the religious poetry for which she would become famous, but very early in her brother's reign she was portrayed as a sympathetic patron of poets. In 1519, the young Clément Marot, hoping to follow his father and enter Marguerite's service, addressed his "Epistre du despourveu" to her. In that poem, Marot portrays the allegorical figure of Bon Espoir, who reassures him about Marguerite:

c'est la Dame de cuer
Mieulx excusant les esperitz, et sens
Des Escrivans, tant soient ilz innocens,
Et qui plus tost leurs miseres desboute.¹¹

Marot continued to refer to Marguerite with deep respect and affection, and eventually many writers would dedicate works to her and benefit from her patronage.¹²

In 1521, Marguerite began a correspondence with Guillaume Briçonnet.¹³ In those letters to Meaux, she presents herself as a humble, troubled soul seeking spiritual direction. When, on 26 July 1524, Claude de France, wife of François I, died, a grieving Marguerite wrote to Briçonnet (*Correspondance*, 2:230). The bishop responded on 31 August with one of the longest letters in the correspondence (2:231–61), a meditation on the mystical marriage of the soul with Christ after the death of the body. Marguerite thanked him for his consoling words but conveyed the further distressing news that Claude's and François's eight-year-old daughter Charlotte was gravely ill. The young princess died in mid-September. Briçonnet again offered consolation (*Correspondance*, 2:262–70). In her response, Marguerite mentioned a project undertaken: "Et si Dieu veult que quelque chose commencée soit finée" (2:292). Scholars disagree in attempting to relate this reference to Marguerite's first literary work. The general view has been that she was alluding to her *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, a poem in which the soul of Charlotte instructs her spiritually troubled

207–32; Anne-Marie Lecoq, *François I^{er} imaginaire: symbolique et politique à l'aube de la Renaissance française* (Paris, 1987), pp. 393–413.

¹¹ Clément Marot, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux, 2 vols. (Paris, 1990–93), 1:72–77 (vv. 125–28) and 1:451–55.

¹² Pierre Jourda, "Le mécénat de Marguerite de Navarre," *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 18 (1931), 253–71; Reid, *King's Sister*, ch. 10, 2:447–95. Reid provides a list of writers who were, in various ways, connected to Marguerite and who supported efforts toward evangelical reform, Table 4, 2:451–57.

¹³ Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79).

aunt.¹⁴ Franco Giaccone, however, has argued that she meant her *Pater noster*, a verse dialogue between “Dieu” and “l’Ame,” commenting on each line of the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁵ W. G. Moore first demonstrated that her model for that work was Martin Luther’s commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, *Kurtz begreiff und ordenung aller vorgeschrieben*.¹⁶ What is clear is that Marguerite had already begun the rich literary production that would mark the rest of her life.

In 1525, François again led a military campaign into northern Italy. This time the results were disastrous for both the king and his kingdom. At Pavia, on 24 February, the French were routed by the Spanish imperial army. François was captured and taken as a prisoner of Charles V to Madrid. Charles d’Alençon was wounded in the battle but escaped capture by fleeing. He returned in dishonor to Lyon where he died on 11 April, attended by his wife. Louise resumed the regency in her son’s absence, and Marguerite’s attention was directed to the task of obtaining François’s release. She traveled to Madrid in August 1525, where she found him gravely ill, but she was unsuccessful in negotiating the ransom that would liberate him. The Treaty of Madrid was not concluded until 14 January 1526 and François was finally able to return to France on 17 March, leaving his two sons in Spain as hostages.¹⁷

In François’s absence, with Marguerite preoccupied and working for his release, it had become more difficult to protect the members of the Meaux group. The Parisian Parlement, encouraged by the Faculty of Theology, moved to arrest and prosecute leaders of evangelical reform in the diocese. In autumn 1525, Lefèvre, Roussel, and Michel d’Arande, Marguerite’s personal chaplain, sought refuge in Strasbourg, where they were joined

¹⁴ Pierre Jourda, “Sur la date du *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*,” *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 14 (1927), 150–61; Christine Martineau and Christian Grouselle, “La Source première et directe du *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*: la lettre de Guillaume Briçonnet à Marguerite de Navarre, du 15 septembre 1524,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 32 (1970), 559–77. The *Dialogue* was published by Simon Du Bois in Alençon in 1533; see Francis Higman, *Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French, 1511–1551* (Aldershot, 1996), M31, pp. 308–09.

¹⁵ Franco Giaccone, “Le premier ouvrage de Marguerite de Navarre: *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* ou *Pater noster*?,” in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, pp. 261–89. Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, vol. 1, *Pater noster et Petit Œuvre dévot*, ed. Sabine Lardon (Paris, 2001).

¹⁶ W. G. Moore, *La Réforme allemande et la littérature française* (Strasbourg, 1930), pp. 187–88.

¹⁷ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 225–48; Reid, *King’s Sister*, 1:345–50. On Marguerite’s mission to Madrid, see Jonathan A. Reid, “Marguerite de Navarre, la sœur fidèle,” in *Les Conseillers de François I^{er}*, ed. Cédric Michon (Rennes, 2011), pp. 415–37.

by Farel. In letters to Farel in Strasbourg, written in 1526 after his return to France, Roussel conveys Marguerite's concern for the French Evangelicals abroad. He tells of presenting part of a work to her—presumably a new translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into French that Lefèvre and other exiles had undertaken—and records that she accepted the offering cheerfully and conveyed her greetings to the group in Strasbourg.¹⁸ When Lefèvre d'Étaples returned to France, Marguerite procured for him the positions of tutor to the king's children and royal librarian. In the following years, he completed his translation of the Bible. When, in 1531, he asked to retire, Marguerite invited him to her court in Nérac, where he spent the remaining years until his death in 1536.¹⁹

When her brother returned from Madrid, Marguerite, a widow and childless after 15 years with her first husband, was once again the subject of marriage negotiations. She married Henri d'Albret, ruler of the disputed kingdom of Navarre, on 24 January 1527. She gave birth to their daughter Jeanne on 16 November 1528. A son, Jean, was born in July 1530 but died the following December. Louise de Savoie died on 22 September 1531.

Marguerite's *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*—the first work by any woman in France to appear in print during her own lifetime—was published anonymously by Simon Du Bois in Alençon in 1531. It was issued under Marguerite's name in 1533 by the Parisian printer Antoine Augereau.²⁰ The young Elizabeth Tudor, future Queen Elizabeth I of England, later translated the *Miroir* into English, working from a copy obtained from France by her mother Anne Boleyn.²¹ By 1533, Marguerite's support for the evangelical reformers was well known and had earned her the animosity of conservatives. In a letter to a friend, the young Jean Calvin described a play produced in October 1533 by students at the Collège de Navarre. One of them portrayed

a Queen, who, in womanly fashion, was taken up with spinning, and wholly occupied with the rock [distaff] and the needle; then the fury Maegera appeared, bringing lighted torches near to her that she might throw away the rock and the needle. For a little while she opposed and struggled; but when

¹⁸ Aimé-Louis Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, 9 vols. (Geneva, 1866–97), 1:439, no 178; 1:449, no 182; 1:457–61, no 184.

¹⁹ Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:384.

²⁰ Pierre Jourda, "Tableau chronologique des publications de Marguerite de Navarre," *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 12 (1925), 209–55 (pp. 211–18); Higman, *Piety*, M34–M38, pp. 309–11. See also the essay by Isabelle Garnier and Isabelle Pantin in this volume.

²¹ Marc Shell, ed., *Elizabeth's Glass: with "The Glass of the Sinful Soul" (1544) by Elizabeth I, and "Epistle Dedicatory" & "Conclusion" (1548) by John Bale* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1993).

she had yielded, she received the Gospel into her hand, and straightway forgets all she had formerly grown into the habit of, and almost even herself. Last of all she becomes tyrannical, persecutes the innocent and unfortunate by every method of cruelty. Many other devices were introduced in the same style, most unworthily indeed against that excellent woman, whom, neither indirectly nor obscurely, they tauntingly revile with their reproaches.

Everyone recognized Marguerite as the queen and saw behind “the fury Maegera” Gérard Roussel, who had indeed raised a fury with the Lenten sermons he preached that spring at the Louvre at Marguerite’s invitation. Calvin continues:

Certain factious theologues have perpetrated another exploit, equally malignant, and perhaps almost as audacious. When they searched the shops of the booksellers, among the books which they brought away, they seized the book which is called *Le Miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, the reading of which they wished to prohibit. When the Queen was informed of it, she called on the King her brother, and told him she had written the book.

Calvin goes on to describe François’s intervention and Nicolas Cop’s chastisement of the Faculty of Theology:

he inveighed in a long and bitter oration against the doctors, because of their rash and arrogant behaviour towards her majesty the Queen. He advised them not to interfere in any way in a matter of so much danger, if they did not wish to incur the displeasure of the King, nor to array themselves against the Queen, that mother of all the virtues and of all good learning.²²

Calvin offers one contemporary’s account of events in 1533 and Marguerite’s role in them. Within weeks of writing that letter, Calvin fled from Paris, as did Nicolas Cop, following Cop’s evangelical inaugural address as rector of the University on 1 November 1533.

October 1534 marks a turning point in the history of religious reform in France. Before that date, François I had been fairly tolerant toward the evangelical reformers and there were signs that certain measures might be implemented without schism. However, François did not tolerate activity that threatened public order in his kingdom. Rising tensions exploded on 18 October when placards attacking the Catholic Mass appeared widely

²² *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. David Constable, 4 vols. (New York, 1858; New York, 1972), 1:36–38, no 9. Cf. Herminjard, *Correspondance*, 3:106–11, no 438; Jean Calvin, *Epistolae*, ed. Cornelis Augustijn and Frans Pieter van Stam, *Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia*, series VI, vol. 1 (Geneva, 2005), pp. 75–80.

in Paris and several provincial cities.²³ Reports claimed that one of them had even been affixed to the door of François's private chambers. Official reaction was swift. Harsh persecution pursued those deemed to be heretics as it never had before. By the end of November, several dissenters and suspected heretics had been executed, including Antoine Augereau, Marguerite's printer. Shaken by the affront to his authority and the threat of worse to come, François withdrew his support from the reformers. Among those who fled France in the aftermath of the *affaire des placards* were Calvin and Clément Marot. Marguerite gave refuge to both men at her castle in Nérac before they proceeded to Italy. From exile in Venice in 1536, Marot appealed to her:

Par devers qui prendront mes vers leur course,
 Synon vers toy, d'éloquence la source,
 Qui les entens sans les falloir gloser,
 Et qui en sçais de meilleurs composer?
 À qui diray ma douleur ordinaire,
 Synon à toy, Princesse debonaire,
 Qui m'a nourry, & souvent secouru,
 Avant qu'avoir devers toy recouru?
 À qui diray le regret qui entame
 Mon cueur de fraiz, synon à toy, ma Dame,
 Que j'ay trouvée en ma premiere oppresse
 (Par dit & fait) plus mere que maistresse?²⁴

The following years were marked by increasing repression. William Monter has detailed the escalation in executions from the late-1530s through the mid-1540s. 130 people were executed for heresy by French Parlements between 1534 and 1545 inclusive, 40 in 1544–45 alone.²⁵ These years also

²³ On the *affaire des placards*, see Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 313–21; Gérard Defaux, "1534, 17–18 October: The Posting of Violent Anti-Catholic Placards in France's Main Cities and on the Very Door of Francis I's Room Launches a Period of Systematic Repression," in Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. 162–67; and Gabrielle Berthoud, *Antoine Marcourt: réformateur et pamphlétaire, du "Livre des marchans" aux placards de 1534* (Geneva, 1973). Francis Higman gives the text of the placards in *La Diffusion de la Réforme en France, 1520–1565* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 72–75.

²⁴ Marot, *Œuvres poétiques*, 2:118–19. See also the late epistle "À ung sien amy," 2:703–05, vv. 71–76.

²⁵ William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), ch. 4, pp. 85–115, and Appendix, pp. 255–57. On that ten-year period, see also Francis Higman, "De l'Affaire des Placards aux Nicodémistes: le mouvement évangélique français sous François I^{er}," in *Lire et Découvrir: La circulation des idées au temps de la Réforme* (Geneva, 1998), pp. 619–25.

saw the deaths of two writers in Marguerite's circle who had been strong voices for evangelical reform: Marot in Turin in 1544; Bonaventure des Périers, apparently by suicide, in the same year. In April 1545, François gave in to pressure and authorized the massacre of the Waldensians in the Provençal villages of Cabrières and Mérindol; some 3000 people deemed heretics were killed by the forces of the baron d'Oppède. That event is accorded relatively little attention today, compared with the later Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre, but it moved the official suppression of reform movements to a new level of violence. In a letter to Farel on 4 May Calvin describes his reaction to

the melancholy intelligence, that several villages have been consumed by fire, that most of the old men had been burned to death, that some had been put to the sword, others having been carried off to abide their doom; and that such was the savage cruelty of these persecutors, that neither young girls, nor pregnant women, nor infants, were spared. So great is the atrocious cruelty of this proceeding, that I grow bewildered when I reflect upon it.²⁶

Farel's response to Calvin tells of the arrival of the news at the French court, the whole grisly story reported triumphantly by the son-in-law of baron d'Oppède. Upon hearing the details, Farel writes, François broke into laughter and responded: "C'est une belle défaite!" His sister's reaction, however, is portrayed as being quite different:

Finally he went to the queen of Navarre. They say she wept many tears over the terrible fate of those pious people, that she responded harshly to the messenger and threatened his father-in-law, the baron d'Oppède, saying: "Your father-in-law is responsible for all of this, but I will do everything in my power to see that he suffers the greatest of misfortunes." She let the messenger kneel for over an hour, nor did she order him to rise.²⁷

Intrigues and conflicts at court also weighed on Marguerite during this period. Henri d'Albret's efforts to regain the territories of Navarre lost to Spain met with disappointment when they conflicted with François's own vacillating political objectives. The marriage in June 1541 of Jeanne d'Albret, then 12 years old, to the German duke of Cleves promised to

²⁶ *Letters of John Calvin*, 1:458; Jean Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, 59 vols. (Braunschweig, 1863–1900), 12:75–76, no 639. See Gabriel Audisio, *Les Vaudois du Luberon: une minorité en Provence, 1460–1560* (Aix-en-Provence, 1984) and D. Boccassini, "Il massacro del Valdesi di Provenza: per una rilettura," *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi* 154 (1984), 61–73. On the political background to the massacre, see Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 508–16.

²⁷ Calvin, *Opera omnia*, ed. Baum et al., 12:79–81, no 643, trans. Mary McKinley.

build François's alliance with the German Protestant princes and advance the cause of evangelical reform. It was strongly opposed by Henri d'Albret, however, who hoped that his daughter would marry Charles V's son, thereby increasing the possibility of Henri's regaining Spanish Navarre. Marguerite's desire to support reform was complicated by her young daughter's vigorous objections to the marriage. Jeanne's departure to join her husband was delayed because of her tender age. François failed to support the duke of Cleves in a crucial battle against Charles V's forces and the marriage was eventually annulled.²⁸

During these years Marguerite also came under attack from reformers who had broken with the Church of Rome and established the Reformed Church in Geneva. They criticized her for what they saw as her lukewarm support of their cause and her accommodations toward the pope. As early as 1539, Marie Dentièrre, a former Augustinian nun who had joined Farel and participated in the Protestant takeover of Geneva, published a letter addressed to Marguerite.²⁹ She began by entreating the queen to intervene more forcefully to protect those still in France who were sympathetic to the Reformed religion. As the letter continues, its tone grows increasingly critical and it indirectly attacks Marguerite and François for accommodating Rome while recognizing the need for reform. Dentièrre's anger may have been provoked in part by François's meetings with Pope Paul III and Charles V in Provence the previous summer. Marguerite had accompanied her brother on that journey and participated in the usual ceremonial festivities marking such encounters.³⁰ The caustic reference of Dentièrre's *Epistle* to the custom of kissing the pope's slipper as a sign of reverence no doubt alludes to those meetings as it excoriates those who believe in reform but dissimulate their convictions by remaining in the Catholic Church.³¹ The *Epistle* thus becomes an oblique indictment of the woman it addresses and initially praises.

²⁸ Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:502–04; Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:251–74. While Marguerite has been accused of callous indifference to her daughter's well-being in this affair, Patricia and Rouben Cholakian offer a more sympathetic analysis of her strategies; see *Mother of the Renaissance*, pp. 212–25.

²⁹ Marie Dentièrre, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin*, ed. and trans. Mary B. McKinley (Chicago, 2004).

³⁰ Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:231–34; Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 385–86; Laurent Ripart, "Marguerite à Nice (juin 1538)," in *Études sur "L'Heptaméron" de Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Christine Martineau-Génieys (Nice, 1996), pp. 123–39.

³¹ Dentièrre, *Epistle*, p. 78.

In 1542, Clément Marot wrote a long, acerbic *Coq à l'âne à Lyon* that advocated the very behavior that Dentièrre decried. Through the poem's enigmatic references, Marot urges evangelical believers to practice self-protection by hiding their dissenting views: "Ne parlez point de l'Evangile, / Si vous n'avez la langue agile / Pour Sorbonner, la bonne myne."³² Marot evokes harassments and persecutions that menace those suspected of heresy and advises his readers to dissimulate when necessary. Later in the same poem he refers allusively to Marguerite:

Que fera l'âme pecheresse?
Je croy qu'el[le] est en grand distresse
Que son miroir est deffendu.
L'anthechrist n'est plus attendu:
Nous l'avons, gardons qu'il eschappe.
Baisez la pantoufle du pape
En disant votre patenostre. (vv. 91–97)

Marot refers to the attack on Marguerite's poem and advises the same strategy of compromise that Dentièrre had scorned. Marot did not publish this *coq-à-l'âne*, nor could he depend on following his own advice for long. He left France for his second and final exile soon after writing the poem.

Dentièrre's *Epistle* echoes Calvin's early attacks from Geneva on people who practiced dissimulation of their dissenting religious views, people whom he would later call "Nicodemites." Already in 1537, he had written to Roussel, castigating him for hypocritically remaining among the "papists" in order to avoid persecution and to receive the benefice of the bishopric he obtained through Marguerite's influence.³³ Calvin was to develop his criticism in his 1544 treatise, *Excuse de Jehan Calvin, à Messieurs les Nicodémistes, sur la complaincte qu'ilz font de sa trop grand' rigueur*, turning the example of Nicodemus back on those who had claimed it as their defense.³⁴ In April 1545, Calvin wrote a letter to Marguerite justifying his treatise *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des Libertins, qui se*

³² Marot, *Œuvres poétiques*, 2:165–71, vv. 45–47. Cf. Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:561–63.

³³ Calvin, *Epistolae duae, Opera omnia*, ed. Baum et al., 5:233–312. Appointed bishop of Oloron in 1536, Roussel assumed his office in 1539.

³⁴ Jean Calvin, *Excuse de Jehan Calvin à Messieurs les Nicodémistes*, in *Three French Treatises*, ed. Francis Higman (London, 1970), Introduction, pp. 21–26, and pp. 131–53. For an English translation of the principal documents in the Nicodemites polemic, see *Come Out From Among Them: "Anti-Nicodemite" Writings of John Calvin*, trans. Seth Skolnitsky (Dallas, 2001). Cf. Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:550–63, and Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, Eng., 1986), pp. 234–75.

nomment spirituelz, a work he understood had offended her because she had invited Thierry Quintin and Antoine Pocque, two prominent members of that group, to preach at Nérac in 1543. Most of what is known today about the Spiritual Libertines—the name Calvin gave them—comes from his and Théodore de Bèze's polemical attacks against them. They appear to have constituted a loose association of radical reformers who preached a mystical devotion to the Holy Spirit that made them incapable of sin. Their movement began in Flanders and has been associated with the 14th-century heresy of the Free Spirit. Quintin had begun preaching in Tournai in 1534, and Pocque joined him in France after spending time in Strasbourg and in Geneva, where, in 1542, he had run afoul of Calvin. In his letter, Calvin stops short of explicitly placing Marguerite among the Nicodemites.³⁵ In his 1544 *Excuse*, however, he had taken a disguised swipe at her in the second of the four sections, where he designates different kinds of Nicodemites: “Je mettray en un mesme ranc les mignons de court, et les Dames qui n'ont jamais apprins que d'estre mignardées, et pourtant ne savent que c'est d'ouyr qu'on parle un peu rudement à leur bonne grace.”³⁶ “Mignonne” was, as many people knew, one of François I's names of endearment for Marguerite.

From another quarter came a different sort of appeal. In 1545, François Rabelais dedicated his *Tiers Livre* to “the spirit of the queen of Navarre”:

Esprit abstraict, ravy, et ecstac,
 Qui frequentant les cieulx, ton origine,
 As delaisé ton hoste et domestic,
 Ton corps concords, qui tant se morigine
 À tes edictz, en vie peregrine
 Sans sentement, et comme en Apathie:
 Vouldrois tu poinct faire quelque sortie
 De ton manoir divin, perpetuel?
 Et ça bas veoir une tierce partie
 Des faictz joyeux du bon Pantagruel?

François Rabelais à l'esprit de la royne de Navarre.³⁷

³⁵ Calvin, *Opera omnia*, ed. Baum et al., 12:64–68, no 634; *Letters of John Calvin*, 1:453–58, no 130. On the Spiritual Libertines and Marguerite, see Carol Thysell, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 19–38, and V. L. Saulnier, ed., *Marguerite de Navarre, Théâtre profane* (Geneva, 1963), pp. 241–73.

³⁶ Calvin, *Excuse*, p. 138.

³⁷ François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Mireille Huchon (Paris, 1994), p. 341. Although the *Tiers Livre* was published in 1546, the *privilege* is dated 6 August 1545.

We have no record of Rabelais's having met Marguerite.³⁸ Like her, he had published in the early 1530s; also like her, he published no major work in the ten years following the *affaire des placards*.³⁹ The first six lines of his *dizain* portray Marguerite as a mystic, a spirit "ravished" out of her body in ecstasy. The idea of the queen's abandoning her body (vv. 3–6) refers primarily, of course, to her physical body, but might also suggest the Church as Christ's mystical body on earth, the *corpus mysticum*, an analogy developed frequently in Paul's Epistles.⁴⁰ The reform of the Church as envisioned by Evangelicals had encountered persecution, and Rabelais's words may articulate the view that Marguerite had withdrawn into a state of spiritual indifference toward things of the world, including the suffering body of the evangelical movement. Seen in this light, Rabelais's lines 7–10 would express his plea that she come back down to earth and engage again in efforts to defend that cause. Unlike Calvin's serious tone, however, Rabelais's is playful; he concludes by inviting the queen to read the *Tiers Livre* with its "jovial deeds of good Pantagruel."

If during these later years, Marguerite may have appeared to some to be withdrawn and uninvolved, she continued to write prolifically. From March 1544 to February 1546, she was at the French court. It was during that sojourn that she read, perhaps in manuscript, a work she had commissioned and which was dedicated to her: Antoine Le Maçon's translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which appeared in 1545 with a *privilege* dated November 1544.⁴¹ Le Maçon's translation apparently found an enthusiastic audience in the royal family, some of whom—including the future King Henri II, his wife Catherine de Médicis, and "Madame Marguerite"—decided to compose a French collection of *cent nouvelles*, in imitation of but departing from the Boccaccian model. When they became distracted from that project, Marguerite de Navarre made it her own, which would

³⁸ "Connaissait-elle Rabelais?" Jourda asks and responds, "La chose est probable" (*Marguerite*, 1:303). Jean Céard argues that the dedication, "qui n'a pas pu être écrite et publiée sans son consentement, prouve que la reine soutient ouvertement Rabelais," *Le Tiers Livre*, ed. Jean Céard (Paris, 1995), p. 4.

³⁹ *Pantagruel* in 1532 and *Gargantua* in 1535; *Gargantua* was completed in 1534. See Huchon, ed. cit., pp. 1054–56.

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. 12:12–14; Rom. 12:4–8; Ephes. 4:11–16; Col. 1:18. See Mary B. McKinley, "Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, et la dédicace du *Tiers Livre*: voyages mystiques et missions terrestres," *Romanic Review* 94.1–2 (2003), 171–83.

⁴¹ Jean Balsamo, "Le *Décameron* à la cour de François I^{er}," *Revue de littérature française et comparée* 7 (1996), 231–39.

lead to the book we now know as the *Heptaméron*.⁴² Prose fiction was a new venture compared with the poetry she had composed up to this point and that she continued to write, along with her stories, until she died.

In February 1546, Marguerite and Henri d'Albret left François's court and returned to their lands in Navarre. Perhaps Calvin's letter and Rabelais's appeal were a factor in the queen's decision to publish the first major collection of her poetry, an enterprise that must have occupied her during the ensuing months. The first edition of the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*, an elegant octavo volume, was printed by Jean de Tournes in Lyon, with a *privilege* dated 29 March 1547.⁴³ The volume included the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*; *Discord estant en l'homme par la contrariete de l'esperit et de la chair*; *Oraison de l'âme fidele à son Seigneur Dieu*; *Oraison à Nostre Seigneur Jésus Christ*; a cycle of four nativity plays; *Le Triomphe de l'Agneau*; *Complainte pour un detenu prisonnier*; 32 *Chansons spirituelles*; a series of verse epistles; *Les quatre dames, et les quatre gentilzhommes*; two non-biblical plays on spiritual themes; *La Coche*, embellished with woodcuts by Bernard Solomon; and several shorter works. A verse epistle by Jean de La Haye and a sonnet signed with the initials of Maurice Scève introduced Marguerite's work.

The *privilege* for the *Marguerites* was accorded at Bordeaux just two days before François I died at Rambouillet on 31 March 1547. Aware of his declining health, Marguerite was apparently trying to reach her brother when she received the news of his death at the priory of Tusson, where she had stopped en route.⁴⁴ Her own health fragile, she remained in seclusion with the community of nuns for several months and found expression for her grief in writing "ce cycle du grand deuil, entamé à Tusson".⁴⁵ *La Navire*, a dialogue with the soul of François in which her dead brother consoles her, a number of the *Chansons spirituelles*, the *Comédie sur le trespas du Roy*, at least one part of *Les Prisons*, and various epistles. She

⁴² The *Heptaméron*'s prologue thus alludes to the book's genesis. For a more detailed discussion, see our essay in this volume. Scholars have disagreed about the identity of "Madame Marguerite," some seeing a reference to Marguerite de France, François's daughter, others a reference to the author herself.

⁴³ *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses, tresillustre Royne de Navarre* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1547). Cf. Jourda, "Tableau chronologique," pp. 224–31, and Higman, *Piety*, M32, p. 309. See The Renaissance in Print, <<http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/digitalcuration/portfolio/gordon/literary/marguerite/marguerites.html>>. Modern edition by Félix Frank, 4 vols. (Paris, 1873; Geneva, 1970). The printed *privilege* date of 29 March 1546, "avant Pasques," reflects the old calendar when the year began at Easter.

⁴⁴ Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:311–17; Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 541–49.

⁴⁵ The expression is Saulnier's, ed. *Théâtre profane*, p. 207.

left Tusson for Béarn in the summer, stopping at Mont-de-Marsan, Nérac, and Pau, before settling for a time in Mont-de-Marsan in January 1548. Here she composed for Mardi Gras the *Comédie jouée au Mont de Marsan*, that V. L. Saulnier sees as her response to Calvin's attack on the Spiritual Libertines.⁴⁶

In the summer of 1548, she traveled with her daughter from Navarre to Lyon to join the court of her nephew, the new king, Henri II, and to accompany him and his queen, Catherine de Médicis, on their royal entries into that city on 23 and 24 September. The royal couple had little sympathy for religious reform, and Marguerite's relations with them were strained at best. On 20 October, on orders from Henri II, Jeanne d'Albret married Antoine de Bourbon. It was a disappointing union from the point of view of Marguerite, who had hoped to see her daughter marry a son of the Spanish royal family, thereby strengthening the Albrets' connection to the lost territories of Navarre. Jeanne's son from that marriage, Henri de Navarre, who, like his mother would embrace the Reformed Church, inherited the French throne in 1589, though was only crowned as Henri IV after his second abjuration and reconversion to Catholicism in 1594.⁴⁷ Marguerite returned to Pau in December 1548 and spent some time there and at Cauterets in the spring with Jeanne. In September, she took up residence in her castle at Odos. Jeanne had returned to her husband and Henri d'Albret departed for Paris, leaving Marguerite in relative solitude. Her health had been poor and in December an infection, perhaps pleurisy, caused her final, rapid decline. She received the sacrament of extreme unction from a Franciscan friar and died on 21 December 1549.

In those last years, marked by disappointment and grief, Marguerite was amazingly productive, and she left a large and diverse corpus unpublished when she died.⁴⁸ In addition to the works mourning François's death, she completed *Les Prisons*⁴⁹ and a revised though not final text of the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*, a long meditation by a woman contemplating the

⁴⁶ *Théâtre profane*, pp. 246–66.

⁴⁷ Jeanne d'Albret declared her conversion to Calvinism two months after her father's death in 1555. See Nancy Roelker, *Queen of Navarre: Jeanne d'Albret* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 120–54, and p. 127 for Jeanne's letter to the Vicomte de Gourdon (22 August 1555), in which she states that she can no longer follow "in the footsteps of the deceased Queen, my most honored mother—whom God forgive—in the matter of hesitation between the two religions."

⁴⁸ In his edition of her uncollected works, Richard Cooper shows the variety of her writing in the last period of her life, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, vol. 8, *Chrétiens et mondains, poèmes épars* (Paris, 2007), pp. 84–97.

⁴⁹ *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva, 1978).

crucified Christ, mirroring herself in his image and finally losing herself in mystical *unio*.⁵⁰ Several verse epistles express her affection for her daughter and her sadness during the separations that followed Jeanne's marriage.⁵¹ Another to Henri II shows her efforts to ease the tensions in her relationship with the king.⁵² She also produced the major part of her collection of *cent nouvelles* during those years. At her death, however, that work remained incomplete.

* * *

The essays collected in the present volume offer a series of analyses of Marguerite's life and literary works. The literary discussions are organized with an eye to chronology, though not in straightforward chronological order. Since an exhaustive consideration of the queen's extensive corpus would have been impossible, we have privileged the representation of her major works as well as the wide range of her production in different genres. Thus chapters focus on a particular work—for example, the long allegorical poem *Les Prisons*—or genre within which Marguerite wrote: theater, *chansons spirituelles*, the short-story collection. Within the latter group of essays, we also sought, in two cases, to stimulate fruitful cross-temporal reflections by pairing a work from the very beginning of Marguerite's career with one from the end of her life. An obvious juxtaposition to make was that of the two long poetic dialogues of mourning, the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and *La Navire*, written, respectively, after the deaths of her niece (1524) and her brother (1547). If the *Dialogue* was the first major poem Marguerite composed, the earliest diffused in print was the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* in 1531. In the months preceding Marguerite's death in 1549, she worked on *Le Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*, a very different kind of poem, but one set also in specular mode, that would be her very last poetic composition.

The analyses of particular works or groups of works are preceded by a discussion of the influence on Marguerite of the ideas of 15th- and 16th-century neo-Platonism, with reference to the whole of her corpus, poetry and prose. The two opening essays propose, on the basis of diverse evidence, two historical examinations of the queen's life that lead to contrasting insights and conclusions.

⁵⁰ *Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié*, ed. Lucia Fontanella (Alessandria, 1984).

⁵¹ *Chrétien et mondains, poèmes épars*, Épître 18, pp. 201–02; Épîtres 20–23, pp. 206–22.

⁵² *Chrétien et mondains, poèmes épars*, Épître 16, pp. 191–97.

For Jonathan A. Reid, Marguerite was a key player in—even the leader at the center of—a network of reform-minded individuals, committed to promoting a number of fundamental tenets such as the biblical foundation of all religious doctrine, the fallen nature of humanity and its utter dependence on God's mercy, and salvation through grace by faith to the complete exclusion of works. Marguerite is presented as orchestrating a concerted campaign for a profound reform of the Church, the advancement of which led her to pursue the political strategy of encouraging her brother to form an alliance with the schismatic Henry VIII of England and the German Protestant princes. Reid considers the French Evangelicals as unable, given the current persecution of heretics, to express publicly the full force of their convictions and as dissembling when necessary their beliefs. According to this view, they acted in fact as they were accused of doing by Calvin, who called them Nicodemites and taxed them with cowardice. The French Evangelicals, for Reid, were thus far from being Catholics favorable to a limited number of non-schismatic reforms; they were rather in fundamental agreement with schismatic, Protestant Evangelicals in Germany and Switzerland. If Marguerite and various close associates remained officially within the institution of the Catholic Church, this is only because to break openly with Rome in France was not possible before the 1560s, short of accepting exile or death.

Jean-Marie Le Gall, on the other hand, following a review of the historiography from Théodore de Bèze in the 16th century to the most prominent scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries, formulates the question of Marguerite's adherence to Catholicism in positive rather than negative terms. Le Gall details the ample evidence of Marguerite's attachment to certain traditional Catholic practices of piety (for example, the cult of the Virgin Mary) and institutions (such as religious orders) and takes these as indicative of a real and positive desire. Le Gall stresses the familial and patrimonial aspects of Marguerite's activities in favor of monastic reform within her personal territories. He also accords fundamental importance to her royal rank, her position in a social and religious hierarchy, a political and ecclesiastical order, that, for Marguerite, was an expression of the divine will. In this providential order, she and her kingly and princely relatives were called to play their proper role along with prelates and the pope. Finally, Le Gall suggests a number of possible personal reasons for Marguerite's attachment to monastic life, especially that of women.

While the differences between the conclusions of Reid and Le Gall are obvious, it is important to recognize a number of positions they share, notably that of Marguerite's particular status as a royal personage, imbued,

despite any personal pursuit of spiritual humility, with the privileges and attitudes of aristocratic rank, one for whom Church and religion were deeply intertwined with national and international politics, with family, and with dynasty. Both historians also remind us that Marguerite's literary works may not tell the whole story regarding her personal religious beliefs, Reid arguing for the necessity of authorial self-censorship even in compositions not intended primarily for public diffusion, Le Gall warning of the dangers of the imposition of potentially anachronistic criteria by modern commentators. These two essays also direct our attention to writings by men close to the queen, men she protected and advanced, and to evidence from diplomatic correspondence: in the case of Reid, to two unpublished catechetical and expository texts (the anonymous *L'Initiatore instruction* and Gérard Roussel's *Familiere exposition*) and to exchanges with the English ambassador; in the case of Le Gall, to a treatise on monastic life by Antonio Caracciolo (*Le Mirouer de vraye religion*) and to relations with the papal nuncios. At the same time, Le Gall signals the interested nature of diplomatic exchanges that, far from representing objective accounts of unfolding events, inevitably reflect mediated desires, hopes, and policies and translate complex and shifting political negotiations, not always free of one degree or another of dissimulation.

From the collected essays, a number of common threads emerge that are worthy of note. Several contributors, for example, point out Marguerite's apparent fidelity, throughout her life, to the ideas and ideals explored in the early 1520s under the spiritual guidance of Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux. Key themes and concepts discussed in their correspondence continue to find significant echoes in the queen's later writings. As we will see further below, some of these ideas were also adopted by Gérard Roussel, a member of the Meaux group to whom Marguerite remained close until her death, and whom she had named to the bishopric of Oloron in her own territory of Navarre.

Collectively, the essays also highlight the centrality in Marguerite's works of a concern with death. This was fed in her own life by the loss of people close to her. We have mentioned already her young niece and her brother, whom she grieves in the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and *La Navire*. François's death also gave rise to the play, *Comédie sur le trespas du roy*, and a number of *chansons spirituelles*. Additionally, in *Les Prisons*, Marguerite portrays the exemplary deaths of her mother, Louise de Savoie, along with that of François, and, in a complementary pairing, the deaths of her first husband, Charles d'Alençon, and his mother, Marguerite de Lorraine. Beyond these immediate personal circumstances,

however, death functions as a fundamental metaphor within the Christian tradition, especially the mystical tradition, expressing the desired moment of the loss of self in order to live in union with God. Death which closes every life, the Christian also believes, is the moment of birth into eternal life. These thematics inform not only Marguerite's poems of mourning, they are omnipresent in her *œuvre*. Inseparable from the issue of death, then, and no less central to the queen's works, is a concern with life as the Christian pilgrimage of faith, the journey of the individual soul toward God. As the essays gathered here suggest, using slightly different terminology, this implies spiritual "movement": conversion, transformation, transcendence, ascent.

For Philip Ford, the inspiration Marguerite draws from Platonic and neo-Platonic sources operates primarily through the borrowing of general images and themes, revealing the extent to which "[s]piritual ascent appears to be at the heart of her thinking." Thus, the body is a prison from which the soul must escape; the moment of release in death is also that in which the soul gains knowledge and returns to its divine origin. Marguerite's two mirror poems, the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* and the *Miroir de Jésus Christ crucifié*, as Isabelle Garnier and Isabelle Pantin show, are involved in "the promotion of a new understanding of death," one celebrating "the death of death" or "la mort vivifiante"—death bringing life, transformation, and deification. Situated in the tradition of the *ars moriendi*, the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*, is also more immediately a preparation for death—first and foremost that of the author herself, which overtook her before the completion of the poem. The *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and *La Navire*, as examined by Reinier Leushuis, reveal themselves to be vast meditations on the role of human agency and will in the processes of mourning, remembrance, and spiritual transcendence. In the face of mortality, these poems ask "what humans can do." For Cynthia Skenazi, it is conversion that is fundamental to the poetics of *Les Prisons*, evidenced through the narrator, who recounts retrospectively his escape from a series of forms of spiritual imprisonment. Ultimately, however, it is the reader who is the focus of a poem that "provokes our personal meditation on key notions—freedom, love, faith, hope, grace—and asks us to translate our moral values and religious principles into life choices." As with Marguerite's other poems of mourning, it is not only the case, for Jan Miernowski, that a number of the *chansons spirituelles* concern the death of François I; rather, all the songs celebrate the profound "harmony of death and love," the "delightful transformation" embraced by the soul that accepts annihilation of the carnal self in confident hope of union

with the divine. Songs of conversion, they themselves cannot convert the reader, but they may “enchant.” Conversion, or lack of it, as Olivier Millet points out, lies at the heart of much of Marguerite’s theater—both biblical and non-biblical—that, also frequently using song, “foregrounds the way the characters inwardly accept or reject the advent of salvation.” On the one hand stand the positive examples of the Magi and shepherds who adore the infant Christ and the sick man and the inquisitor in *Le Malade* and *L’Inquisiteur*, on the other, the negative examples of Herod or Trop and Prou. Combining the two possibilities, *Mont-de-Marsan* stages both “conversion and the impossibility of self-conversion.” In the short story collection *L’Heptaméron*, finally, as our own essay shows, death is a common element of the narratives, though not a banal one. In a tale of suicide, it may serve to criticize the despair induced by a deathly theology of works preached by a Franciscan; at other times, it represents the ultimate moment of transcendence and union with God. Death also has a structuring role in the collection, being associated with the flood, the inaugural calamity gathering together the storytellers that both recalls the *Decameron*’s Black Death and alludes to the motifs of baptism and divine judgment. Like Marguerite’s theater, the *Heptaméron* depicts fallen human beings responding to and moving toward or turning away from God. Though incomplete, the challenge it describes for the storytellers and for the intended reader is that of being counted among the former.

Equally significant is the fact that many of Marguerite’s works either take the form of dialogues or are informed by dialogic principles.⁵³ This is most obviously true of the long poems *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and *La Navire* (and it is central to the analysis of Leushuis). The poetic dialogues allow for a pedagogical exchange, but one in which the “disciple”/“Marguerite” is an active partner, not merely a passive recipient of wisdom, as she was also in the exchange of letters with Briçonnet. Dialogism finds a natural expression in writing for the stage and is central to Marguerite’s dramatic practice (as Millet notes); it also structures the *Heptaméron*, where the discussions of the storytellers are of no less

⁵³ A number of critics have noted the importance of dialogism for Marguerite. In the words of Robert D. Cottrell, “a dialogic impulse animates all of Marguerite’s poetry,” *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre’s Poetry* (Washington, D.C., 1986), p. 131. See also, in particular, Colette Winn, “Toward a Dialectic of Reconciliation: The *Navire* and the *Heptameron* of Marguerite de Navarre,” in *The Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547–1630: Art and Argument*, ed. Colette H. Winn (Washington, D.C., 1993), pp. 79–120. Winn points out that Marguerite’s *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* was one of the first texts in France to designate itself a dialogue in its title.

importance than the tales they recount and none of the speakers has a monopoly on truth. Some, like Oisille, are certainly characterized by a greater degree of spirituality than others. The women, in general, are also frequently more honest in their discussion of male-female relations, in which men's seduction is often synonymous with one degree or another of deceit. This does not mean, however, that the women never dissemble or that one of the most ribald men might not on occasion give voice to a genuine religious or spiritual insight. Dialogue, for Marguerite, thus seems to have represented a means of pursuing greater understanding, enlightenment, or spiritual progress, a means that is open, collaborative, respectful, and profoundly human. Dialogue is also characteristic of prayer and, as such, is present in almost all of her works, from the shortest of the spiritual songs to the longest poetic meditations.

Marguerite was a duchess, a peer of France, a queen, a writer and thinker profoundly engaged with and committed to religious and spiritual life. She was not, however, a systematic theologian. Even had she aspired to do so, it is doubtful that it would have been possible for a laywoman to publish a theological treatise in 16th-century France. Nevertheless, like many other French Evangelicals, Marguerite seems to have been genuinely more concerned with spiritual life and with the practical life of faith than with the exposition of dogmatic thought. Her unwavering objective seems to have been the pursuit and the promotion of fervent belief, true prayer, and devout Christian living. This is not to say that Marguerite's literary and devotional works do not carry theological meaning.⁵⁴ Many scholars, including several contributors to this volume, have shown that they do, relating leading ideas to those of contemporaries on both sides of and in between the developing confessional divide. Yet what emerge most clearly from Marguerite's works are often not detailed dogmatic propositions but strong, broad ideas of immediate, practical relevance to Christian life. Moreover, these are often expressed by means of biblical or more specifically Pauline phrases or expressions that were characteristic of those in France advocating a moderate religious position. In his unpublished *Familiere exposition*, Gérard Roussel argues in relation to the Eucharist for the importance of simply accepting and not inquiring beyond the words

⁵⁴ Considering Marguerite's poetry as devotional writing—a genre understood as variously combining elements of the language and epistemological structures of both spiritual-mystical and theological-dogmatic writing—is the fundamental approach adopted by Gary Ferguson in *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre's Devotional Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1992).

of Christ himself recorded in the gospels; to do otherwise, for Roussel, leads inevitably to disagreement.⁵⁵ Marguerite would likely have been in sympathy with such sentiments, as well as preferring theological formulations to be pragmatic, of practical use to the Christian in living the life of faith. A notable example of such an approach to a major theological question of contention is the presentation of the respective roles of faith and works in the process of salvation.

Marguerite does not deny that the truly Christian life will be characterized by good works. In the 16th century, various linguistic formulae existed to express the relation between faith and charity, such as *foi formée de/en charité*, *foi œuvrant/qui œuvre par charité*, *vraie et vive foi*, and so on.⁵⁶ As is the case with other Evangelicals, Marguerite's term of predilection is *foi vive*, an expression which may suggest faith accompanied by works of charity as well as a lively confidence and trust in God and his promises. Gary Ferguson has argued that in Marguerite's later poetry the association of the term *vive foi* with the performance of good works becomes less evident.⁵⁷ This does not necessarily mean, however, that she abandoned this idea altogether. In two late works, Marguerite has recourse to the formula *foi qui œuvre par charité* or *foi œuvrant*, that is, faith working through charity. This linguistic tag, much favored by Evangelicals like Lefèvre d'Étaples, had the dual advantage of being biblical, drawn from Saint Paul's Letter to the Galatians 5:6, and of not suggesting any primacy of charity and its works over faith, positing rather charity as an expression or effect of faith. In the very last poem Marguerite composed, the *Miroir de Jésus Christ crucifié*, the formula *faith working through charity* is applied not to human actions but to those of Christ (figured by King David);⁵⁸ in a verse epistle addressed to her brother François I, however, it is presented as the blessed fruit that will grow from peace between the French king and the emperor Charles V, uniting Christians and converting the pagans:

⁵⁵ See Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:527. Cf. Reid's essay in this volume.

⁵⁶ On this question and Marguerite's position in relation to it, see Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 147–78, and Isabelle Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète et la connivence: Écriture concertée chez les Évangéliques français (1523–1534)* (Geneva, 2005), esp. pp. 157–97. See also the essay by Garnier and Pantin in this volume.

⁵⁷ See *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 168–77, a conclusion corroborated with regard to the *chansons spirituelles* by Jan Miernowski and to *La Navire* by Reinier Leushuis in their essays in this volume.

⁵⁸ See Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 176–77, and the essay by Garnier and Pantin in this volume.

C'est qu'unysant la chrestienté toute
 En seure paix, et que nulluy n'ayt doubte
 D'avoir du mal, si ne l'a meritté,
 Et que la foy ouvrant par charité
 Regne si fort entre les Chrestiens,
 Qu'à leur exemple accourent les payens
 La recepvoir, chantantz par les provinces:
 Voicy le fruit de la paix des deux princes.⁵⁹

In adopting this particular term, then, Marguerite articulates a conviction that works do not save, nor are they necessary to salvation, nor do they give form or life to faith that without them would be formless or dead—works that without faith would themselves be dead. It signals that true, living faith of its nature overflows and is expressed in works of charity. A similar position is delineated in the late works of Roussel, who instructs his clergy to exhort the faithful to believe and to act (*croire et faire*).⁶⁰ Drawing a metaphor from the human body, the bishop elaborates: “là où la foy est vive, l'œuvre tantost la suyt et accompagne non plus ne moins que le respirer, sentir, mouvoir accompagnent l'homme vivant.”⁶¹

The significance for Marguerite of the concept of “the eye of faith,” related to the metaphor of the eye as the lamp of the body found in the Gospel of Saint Matthew 6:22–23, has been demonstrated by Jan Miernowski.⁶² The “eye of faith” is the intention of the Christian, the heart purified and focused on its ultimate goal of conformity to the divine will and union with God. This idea had been discussed by Briçonnet in his letters to Marguerite in the 1520s. We also find it in the 1540s in the writing of Roussel, who combines it with the notion of faith working through charity. In discussing how God requires truth of the believer in words, deeds, and doctrine, Roussel nonetheless adds that this should be directed and regulated by “l'œil de foy ouvrante par charité, lequel est simple, ne regardant pour vray but que la gloire de Dieu et le bien du prochain.”⁶³ The striking combination of the two distinct formulae (*œil de foy* and *foy ouvrante*) suggests not that the eye of faith is opened, as it were, by

⁵⁹ *Chrétiens et mondains, poèmes épars*, p. 181; Épître 13, vv. 107–14, dated probably, according to Cooper, January 1545.

⁶⁰ See Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:529.

⁶¹ Quoted in Reid, *ibid.*, n. 75.

⁶² Jan Miernowski, “L'intentionnalité dans l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 63 (2001), 201–25. See also Miernowski's essay in this volume.

⁶³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 419, Gérard Roussel, *Familière exposition*, fol. 78r. Cf. the essay by Reid in this volume.

charity; it designates the kind of faith that truly constitutes the eye through which Christians must look in order to be fixed on their final goal. It is the *eye of faith-working-through-charity* that will enable them always to speak and to act to the glory of God and for the good of their fellows. This desire to avoid suggesting that works might merit salvation and yet to maintain the essential and necessary unity of faith and charity lies at the heart of the practical theology of the French Evangelicals and of Marguerite.

There can be little doubt that Marguerite must have found the most conservative and reactionary sections of the Catholic Church of her day unedifying if not inimical, including the theologians of the Sorbonne who persecuted those striving for an evangelical renewal of the Church, men and women she protected and whose work she patronized, beginning with Lefèvre d'Étaples and the other members of the Meaux group. Nonetheless, like Lefèvre, Briçonnet, Roussel, and others—or like Erasmus—Marguerite remained within the Catholic Church throughout her life, maintaining good relationships with Rome and its representatives. She also had direct or indirect contacts with schismatic reformers in Germany and Switzerland as well as with French Evangelicals like Farel who took the decision to join them. While she would later be in disagreement with Calvin over the Spiritual Libertines, she had nonetheless protected the future Reformer in his youth as he fled persecution in France. In between the outer ends of the spectrum of religious beliefs and ideas in the early 16th century there were innumerable intermediate shades of opinion and degrees of sympathy. One thing that emerges clearly from the essays of Reid and Le Gall is that people of all stripes were eager to see and to present Marguerite as sharing their own position. The essay of Garnier and Pantin offers a vivid demonstration of how this dynamic of subtle appropriation was at work, immediately after the queen's death, in the publication of her last poetic composition in two separate editions, one prepared by a Dominican friar the other by a sympathizer with reform. As our own essay notes, the stories of the *Heptaméron* were subjected to similar processes of reworking and recontextualization for confessional ends.

The long-meditated project of holding an ecumenical council finally began to be realized in Trent in 1545, four years before Marguerite's death; it would only come to conclusion almost twenty years later in 1563. The Council launched the Counter- or Catholic Reformation, changing definitively the face of the Roman Church and setting it on a course opposed in all points to ideas and practices of reform embraced by Protestants and declared heretical. In the first half of the 16th century, when confessional divisions were not yet firmly established, it was still possible

to be a Catholic and to share some of these ideas—to not consider as anti-Catholic, for example, the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular (a position vindicated ultimately in the 20th century by the Second Vatican Council). Marguerite was committed to religious renewal and reform, reform founded not, however, on schism but on unity. She was no less committed to the promotion of a personal piety grounded both in individual study of the Bible and in the reception of the sacraments—and not only the two sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist—mediated through the Church's sacerdotal ministry, a piety nourished also by the mystical tradition, that might be sustained by contemplative retreat and a sharing in the offering of the monastic liturgy of the hours. The sources from which she drew inspiration were many and diverse, from neo-Platonic writings, through the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to the recent publications of Luther.

Marguerite's position must no doubt be understood in part in light of her privileged situation as a high-ranking noble, one who was a major actor in both the political and religious spheres, a woman who governed territories in various capacities in her own right, who was a close advisor to rulers, who negotiated in delicate or fraught situations with foreign sovereign powers and their envoys. Marguerite's religious and ecclesiastical vision was a profoundly royal and diplomatic one. With historical hindsight, it may seem to have been overly optimistic. It was nonetheless an ideal that it was possible to pursue in France in the early decades, even the first half, of the 16th century, in a particularly fluid concurrence of circumstances involving traditional and new forms of religious thought and expression—overlapping and as yet not reified in terms of confession—and dependent on a particular understanding of the status of the Gallican Church and of the configuration and balance of temporal-political and spiritual powers. And while circumstances would change considerably during the reign of Marguerite's nephew, Henri II, a similar—though more forlorn—hope would briefly animate Henri's widow and son in 1561. With the Council of Trent as yet unconcluded and currently suspended and with civil war about to break out in France, Catherine de Médicis and Charles IX called together Catholic and Protestant theologians and leading national figures in an attempt to find common ground at the Colloquy of Poissy.

If Marguerite de Navarre was not a systematic theologian, she was undeniably a committed, creative, and supple religious thinker, who lived and wrote at a particularly complex time in the history of Western Christianity—a time full of challenge and danger but also of possibility

and potential, a good deal of which, however, would not be realized in the way that she and many around her would likely have wished. Marguerite championed a practical yet fervent religious message, destined to promote devout and faithful Christian living, involving action flowing from Bible reading, prayer, and the reception of the sacraments, and stressing a number of key ideas, such as the fallen nature of humanity and the Christian's utter dependence on God's grace. Her vision was broad and generous; characterized by conviction, it often found expression in the decisive exercise of (personal) temporal authority, yet it also favored conciliation: in drawing inspiration from numerous sources and traditions, in maintaining dialogue with all sides, in seeking to go beyond partisanship, in embracing practical worldly concerns and mystical élan. It is for this reason that her life and work have given rise to such a diversity of judgments and resist easy categorization or pigeon-holing. This volume does not seek to pronounce the last word on Marguerite de Navarre as a religious thinker. Its essays examine her life and review her major works and their reception; they synthesize previous scholarship and extend our understanding through new analyses. We hope they will provide the stimulus and point the way for future studies of the complex and fascinating Christian woman who is their subject.

MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE AND EVANGELICAL REFORM

Jonathan A. Reid

Car par eulx [François I and Charles V] [Dieu] veult
que la foy confirmée
Soit, et aussy l'eglise reformée,
Et d'une part oustées les heresies,
De l'aulture aussy les vaines fantaisies,
Et que la foy nous face en toute guise
En triumpfant triumpfer sainte Eglise.
(New Year's Day Epistle, Marguerite to François I
[c. January 1545])¹

I. *Marguerite: Actor and Author in the Reformation*

Throughout her career as a prominent member of court, Marguerite kept urging major powers—her brother François I, his son Henri II, Henry VIII of England, Pope Paul III, reforming bishops, and Protestant princes and theologians—to effect “la reformation de l'Eglise,” to “reformer et conserver la Christienté.”² As an actor in the Reformation conflict, she mounted a series of campaigns to advance religious renewal, the most important of which concentrated on swaying her brother's heart and religious policy. As an author, one who wrote much but published little until the end of her life, Marguerite expressed in her poems, plays, songs,

¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, vol. 8, *Chrétiens et mondains, poèmes épars*, ed. Richard Cooper (Paris, 2007) [hereafter *OC* 8], Épître 13, pp. 178–81, vv. 65–70.

² As early as 1521, Marguerite believed her brother and mother were ready to promote “la reformation de l'Eglise, où plus que jamais le Roy et Madame sont affectionnez, et le salut de toutes pauvres ames,” Marguerite to Guillaume Briçonnet, [Compiègne, c.10 December 1521], in Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79), 1:75–76, no 17 (Reid, “Additions,” no 38). She retained hope for a royal reformation even after François I's death (31 March 1547), writing to Pope Paul III: “je le [Dieu] suplye vous [the pope and Henri II] lier sy bien ensamble et par vostre bon moyen l'empereur, ansy [ainsi] que vous troys puisiés reformer et conserver la Christienté,” Charles Samaran and Henry Patry, “Marguerite de Navarre et le pape Paul III: lettres inédites,” *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 68 (1907), 320–38 (p. 336) (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 1037). For the conventions used in citing Marguerite's correspondence, see note 4.

and prose *Heptaméron* the profound piety and zeal for instilling in others “vivifying faith” (her term) which animated her persistent efforts to promote reform. Indeed, her literary imagination can be seen as an outgrowth of her self-appointed role as the evangelical cause’s chief advocate at court. She peopled her verse and prose works with the figures of courtiers: herself, her closest relations, and other favorites. In dialogue with one another or a heavenly guide, these figures are converted from sinfulness to thankful union with their Savior Christ.³ This common trajectory in her major works reflects her desire to lead those nearest to her to a renewed faith, and through their influence, others in the kingdom and countries beyond.

The focus of this essay is twofold. First, it describes Marguerite’s several campaigns—ones that largely failed—to promote, in concert with a network of like-minded Evangelicals whom she championed, a hotly contested reform agenda. Second, it relates how the literary works of the queen and authors she championed contributed to this reformation project. Evidence from those works will permit, in conclusion, a response to the long-standing controversy, one inherited from the Reformation era itself, about whether she and those around her were Catholic, Protestant, or something other.⁴

This essay argues that Marguerite and her network shared with “Protestants” belief in a number of core doctrines.⁵ Dissenting from the

³ Paula Sommers, *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre’s Poetry of Spiritual Ascent* (Geneva, 1989).

⁴ For a fuller presentation of the views developed below, see Jonathan A. Reid, *King’s Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, 2009) [hereafter KS], in particular the “Introduction” (pp. 1–15) for a historiographical orientation and ch. 2, “Mapping the Navarrian Network” (pp. 35–84), for an overview of her reforming career and network as well as the source base. That work disagrees with many interpretations of Marguerite’s major biographer, Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d’Angoulême, Duchesse d’Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978). Parts of section II of this essay follow Jonathan A. Reid, “Marguerite de Navarre, la sœur fidèle,” in *Les Conseillers de François I^{er}*, ed. Cédric Michon (Rennes, 2011), pp. 415–37.

Appendix A of KS contains additions and corrections to Jourda’s essential *Répertoire analytique et chronologique de la correspondance de Marguerite d’Angoulême, Duchesse d’Alençon, Reine de Navarre, 1492–1549* (Paris, 1930). References to Marguerite’s correspondence in this essay cite the published or manuscript source and the appropriate finding aid (Jourda, *Répertoire*) or (Reid, “Additions”).

⁵ “I have tried to use for Germany’s Protestants the name they used for themselves, *Evangelicals*, and to reserve *Protestant* for the rulers and the urban regimes that adhered to this cause, a practice that also follows their usage. All Protestants were Evangelicals, but not all Evangelicals, were Protestants,” Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) and the German Reformation* (Boston, 1995), p. xv. For use of the

established Church, Evangelicals held that Scripture is the sole source of doctrine and that God justifies sinners by grace through faith alone. These core principals led them to condemn major portions of the traditional Church's economy of grace and attempt a thorough-going reform of its doctrines, sacraments, and rites. Marguerite and her network have rightly been called "evangelical" by modern historians, for they consistently said that the goal of their reform agenda was to promote the gospel. In private, they even adopted the label, but could not do so in public;⁶ their Catholic adversaries blamed them for claiming such an "evangelical" identity, denying it to be true.⁷ German Protestants, in turn, recognized Marguerite and her network as their "brethren."⁸ Following the Protestants in the Empire, French Evangelicals came to reject, at least in private, the claims of the traditional Catholic Church, centered on Rome, to be the only true Church and sole guarantor of doctrine, the sacraments, and salvation. Yet, they also recognized that the established Church hierarchy was a formidable worldly power and continued to interact with it as such. They never publicly denounced, as did Protestants, Rome as the Antichrist or rejected the existing Church as irredeemably corrupt; nor did Marguerite and her network accept Church authorities' condemnation of Evangelicals as heretics. Ultimately, they aimed to establish right religion by transcending the confessional war waged by Protestants and Catholics, which was leading Western Europe towards permanent schism.

This assessment of Marguerite's and her network's beliefs, reform initiatives, and goals depends on a close analysis of the strife-ridden, high-stakes

term evangelical by 16th-century actors and modern scholars, see Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, "Nommer et définir les groupes hérétiques," in *Les Frontières religieuses en Europe du XV^e au XVII^e siècle: Actes du XXXI^e colloque international d'études humanistes*, ed. Robert Sauzet (Paris, 1992), pp. 37–49.

⁶ Very early on it became dangerous to champion the gospel (claim to be evangelical). In 1524, Pierre de Sébiville lamented that "Sathan a estainct le fruit de l'Évangille en France... Pour confabuler ensemble secrètement de l'Évangille nul ne dict rien, mais de en parler publicquement il n'y pend que le feu," but rejoiced that the movement had powerful patrons, "grands zélateurs de l'Évangille," like Marguerite, the most evangelical of all: "Il n'y a point aujourd'hui en France plus évangélique que la Dame d'Alençon," Aimé-Louis Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, 9 vols. (Geneva, 1866–97), 1:314–15, no 132.

⁷ In 1542, a rival of Marguerite's secretary, Charles de Sainte-Marthe, mocked his claims to religious identity: "Tu te vantes d'être évangélique / Tu parles sans cesse du Christ / Tu dis qu'il est doux de vivre à la manière des apôtres," Hubert Sussanée, "In Samarthem," quoted in translation by J. J. Hémardinquer, "Les Prisons d'un poète: Charles de Sainte-Marthe (1537–1543)," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 20 (1958), 177–183 (p. 178).

⁸ See Martin Bucer's letter to Philipp Melanchthon in note 31.

arena in which they operated. Marguerite and her network adjusted their plans to the following facts. First, the Reformation was a political event. In France, the king and power elites had the authority to enforce a religious settlement and punish dissent. Marguerite pinned her principal hope for reform on her brother; she regulated the tempo of her network's activities according to his changing favor. Second, France's orthodox confessional orientation was provisionally fixed as early as 1521 by the Paris Faculty of Theology's condemnation of Luther, the Parlement of Paris's prohibition of works containing his heresy, and the crown's commitment to punish dissenters. Thereafter, a coalition of conservatives from the Faculty of Theology, the Parlement, and the royal court sought to shore up Catholic orthodoxy by affirming traditional doctrines, persecuting heretics, and censoring books.⁹ Their chief domestic targets included Marguerite and the members of her network. From 1521 onward, Marguerite tried to convince her brother that "la verité de Dieu" espoused by Evangelicals "n'est point heresie."¹⁰ Third, persecution forced Evangelicals to advance their views with extreme caution. Marguerite and other Evangelicals habitually simulated orthodoxy and auto-censored their communications, especially what they published.¹¹ Their deeds and words, consequently, must be interpreted as representing far less than what they would have liked to do or say, the full extent of which has to be reconstructed by contextualizing their every action and utterance.

II. Actor in the Reformation

Marguerite was born in 1492 and attained significant power after her brother became king in 1515. She only emerges in the sources, however, as a major Reformation figure around 1521. The limited evidence we possess about Marguerite's career to 1521 reveals that she was already supporting the most advanced late-medieval programs of religious renewal. With her mother, Louise de Savoie, and her brother, she seconded ongoing efforts to return wayward Benedictine, Franciscan, and Dominican houses to

⁹ On the Parisian hub of this axis, see James K. Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVI^e siècle: Université et Parlement de Paris à l'époque de la Renaissance et de la Réforme* (Paris, 1992).

¹⁰ After having successfully convinced François I and Louise de Savoie to protect Lefèvre d'Étaples, Marguerite assured Briçonnet "que le Roy et Madame i ont bien deliberé de donner à congnoistre que la verité de Dieu n'est point heresie," [Compiègne, 21 or 22 November 1521], *Correspondance*, 1:71, no 15A (Reid, "Additions," no 35).

¹¹ See note 6 and section III below.

strict observance of their rules, a movement that had begun in the 1490s.¹² Monastic reform was a family affair. Her mother-in-law, Marguerite de Lorraine (whose exemplary death she recounts in *Les Prisons*),¹³ retired to a nunnery in 1517, charging Marguerite with administering funds to support the convent. As she would throughout her life when caring for other monastic foundations, Marguerite sought to ensure the material and spiritual well-being of her mother-in-law's Franciscan house.

During the period 1518 to 1521, Marguerite came under the sway of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, a leading Christian humanist. "Faber Stapulensis" had had a distinguished career as a scholar and teacher of the Liberal Arts and philosophy at the University of Paris. Starting in 1508, he had shifted focus from commenting on and retranslating Aristotle's works and other core texts in the arts curriculum to publishing works suited to improving clerical education. Most importantly, he had helped to lead the first wave of northern humanists, including Erasmus and Johannes Reuchlin, in revising the Latin Vulgate Bible and in elucidating the Scriptures based on the study of the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

In 1516, Louise de Savoie asked her almoner, François de Moulins (or Desmoulins/Du Moulin) de Rochefort, for a new account of the life of Mary Magdalene, a popular saint closely associated with the power and authority of French kingship, and of Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin and patron saint of conception. Louise was seeking Saint Anne's aid for Marguerite, who remained childless after ten years of marriage to Charles d'Alençon. Moulins turned to Lefèvre, who promptly produced several treatises in which he rejected as biblically unfounded the traditional identification of the Magdalene with Mary the sister of Martha and the sinful woman mentioned in Luke 7, as well as the legend that Saint Anne had had three daughters named Mary by three successive husbands, asserting that she had given birth only to the Virgin. These tracts occasioned a minor international pamphlet war among scholars just at the moment when the far more contentious "Luther affair" was beginning to shake Europe. Lefèvre's opponents, led by members of the Paris Faculty of Theology, accused him, like Luther, of undermining popular piety and the authority of the Church.

¹² Marguerite's first datable letter, 23 August [1515], was in support of the reformed Dominicans of Le Mans, Paris, Archives nationales, X^{1A} 9322, fol. 75 (Reid, "Additions," no 10003). On her religious interests to 1520, see KS, pp. 85–114; on her lifelong support for and critique of monasticism, see Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Les Moines au temps des Réformes, France (1480–1560)* (Seyssel, 2001), chs. 2 and 12.

¹³ Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva, 1978), pp. 207–09, Bk. 3, vv. 2160–240.

In 1521, Lefèvre and his disciples moved to the diocese of Meaux in order to flee the hostility of the Paris theologians and to help their patron, Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet, with his foundering efforts to improve his clergy and their ministrations. Immediately after the Fabrists' arrival, Marguerite initiated an intense collaboration with the Meaux group. While she had previously worked with Briçonnet on monastic reform and corresponded with him principally during the Fabrists' stay at Meaux, her closest connection remained with Lefèvre and his disciples. In her first letter to Briçonnet she requested that one of the group, Michel d'Arande, return to court in order to deliver a course of biblical instruction.¹⁴ After the dissolution of the Meaux group in 1525, Marguerite championed Lefèvre, d'Arande, Pierre Caroli, Gérard Roussel, and other ex-Meaux campaigners, while dropping all relations with Briçonnet.

Marguerite's intimate involvement with the Meaux group laid the foundation for her career and activity as a reformer. During that time, she acquired the basic structure of her mature faith, began her career as a writer, and allied with them and a growing circle of sympathizers farther afield to advance the evangelical movement. The letters, books, and deeds of Marguerite and her collaborators reveal they were waging a coordinated campaign to advance the renewal of the faith and the Church on several fronts, attempting to: (1) convert François and others at court to the evangelical cause, Christ and his gospel, *le seul nécessaire* or *negotium evangelii* as they termed it; (2) build a network of like-minded believers at court and across France; (3) disseminate their gospel message widely to clergy and laity through preaching and publishing books; (4) protect adherents from persecution and censure; (5) promote Evangelicals to positions of influence; and (6) collaborate with Evangelicals abroad to win a favorable political settlement to the religious contest.

The Heart of the King

Of these six activities, Marguerite's campaign to sway François I was the most important for advancing the evangelical cause. Marguerite twinned her attempts to convert François's heart with specific policy proposals. The first phase of her campaign—from the beginning of the Meaux reform through François's captivity after the battle of Pavia (1525)—began favorably. In November 1521, Marguerite boasted, as the self-appointed

¹⁴ [Before 12 June 1521], *Correspondance*, 1:25, no 1 (Reid, "Additions," no 15).

“advocate” of the Meaux group and “sub-minister” of their teachings at court, that François and Louise de Savoie were favorable to a reformation of the Church.¹⁵ By the next spring, however, she was complaining that “thorns”—an allusion to Chancellor Duprat and other conservatives—had deflated the royals’ enthusiasm. Again in September 1522, she tried to convince François and Louise to back a specific reform program formulated by Briçonnet and Lefèvre.¹⁶ Although the text of that proposal is lost, her correspondence with Briçonnet indicates that they had urged the court to adopt the Meaux reform program as a model for the French Church. Specifically, they were appealing for François to select only worthy men, ones who would ensure the preaching of the gospel, for vacant ecclesiastical offices, in order to replace the many worldly prelates who were extinguishing religion. As Briçonnet described them colorfully: “Je parle de moy et mes semblables . . . plus froidz que viperes, que estraingons tout feu de grace, vraies salamandres diabolicques.”¹⁷

François and Louise reacted favorably to this overture initially, but cooled to it by November when the king’s confessor, Guillaume Petit, denounced Marguerite’s court preacher, Michel d’Arande, for defending Luther’s doctrines. Briçonnet advised Marguerite to temporize:

Le porteur m’a tenu propos de grande pauvreté, auquel monsieur Fabry [Lefèvre d’Étaples] et moy avons dict nostre advis . . . Il vous plaira couvrir le feu pour quelques temps: le bois [François and Louise] que voulez faire brusler est sy verd qu’il estaindroit le feu et ne conseillons pour plusieurs raisons . . . que passez oultre, sy ne voulez du tout estaindre le tizon et le surplus qui desire se brusler et aultres enflamber.¹⁸

This setback came just as the Fabrists were leading the Meaux reform in unprecedented directions. By 1523, they had refocused their efforts from clerical renewal to direct evangelization of the laity, hoping to teach commoners the doctrine of God’s free salvation of sinners and enable them to

¹⁵ See note 2 and Marguerite’s reports to Briçonnet from June 1521 to February 1522, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, nos 5, 14, 26, and 33 (Reid, “Additions,” nos 20, 33, 51, and 58); for a full account, see KS, pp. 186–93.

¹⁶ Allusion in Marguerite’s letter to Briçonnet, [c.15 September 1522, Saint-Germain-en-Laye], *Correspondance*, 1:216, no 41 (Reid, “Additions,” no 71).

¹⁷ Briçonnet to Marguerite, 22 December 1521, *Correspondance*, 1:107, no 20 (Reid, “Additions,” no 41). For Briçonnet’s damning criticism of the clergy, see KS, pp. 200–11 and Heather M. Vose, “A Sixteenth-Century Assessment of the French Church in the Years 1521–24 by Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet of Meaux,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39 (1988), 509–19.

¹⁸ *Correspondance*, 1:230, no 47 (Reid, “Additions,” no 85).

teach this message to others. Emulating Luther's translation of the New Testament into German, Lefèvre published French versions of the New Testament and Psalms in 1523. Having distributed free copies of these texts to the laity, the Meaux group's preachers read the Sunday lectionary readings in French and gave exegetical sermons on them. In 1524, following the example of the reformer Oecolampadius, Gérard Roussel and four other preachers started giving daily lessons on Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Psalms to groups of lay people advanced in the faith. Pierre Caroli initiated a similar effort in Paris. In addition to teaching their core message of salvation by faith in Christ alone, some preachers like Roussel, Caroli, and Masurier attacked as unscriptural major aspects of the Church's teaching about the cult of the saints, works, merits, and other "human inventions." All the while, Meaux group members were corresponding with Evangelicals in the Empire, whom they credited with inspiring major aspects of their reform program (*KS*, pp. 268–74).

Marguerite, however, had few opportunities after 1522 to advance the Meaux group's new program of lay evangelization at court. At best, she was able to mount a rear-guard action to protect the Fabrists and other Evangelicals from persecution. In the summer of 1523, Marguerite convinced the royals to protect Louis de Berquin, a courtier who had been caught with heretical books (including translations of works by Luther), Lefèvre, and other Meaux group members from a sweeping heresy investigation mounted by the Faculty of Theology.

Thereafter, François and Louise de Savoie were preoccupied with the war effort. Meanwhile, conservatives began publically accusing Marguerite and other notables at court of fostering heresy. Louise and Chancellor Duprat capitulated to pressure in the autumn of 1523 and again in 1525, authorizing anti-heresy measures. Bending to the political winds, Briçonnet issued edicts against Luther's teachings and cooperated with the Parliament of Paris's investigation of heretics at Meaux, especially after radicals defaced prayers to the Virgin posted in the cathedral and mocked papal indulgences. As the bishop drew back from further agitation, Marguerite took the lead of what was now a growing evangelical network, whose members at court and in Meaux, Paris, Poitiers, Lyon, and Grenoble corresponded and collaborated with increasing intensity from 1524 through 1526 with French exiles and sympathetic German reformers in Strasbourg, Basle, Zürich, and Wittenberg (*KS*, pp. 64–84, 254–74).

Marguerite made her leadership of the network clear, and was given full credit for it by its members, by sponsoring and protecting several evangelical preachers across France from late 1523 through 1525, including

Michel d'Arande at Alençon, Bourges, and Macon, Aimé Meigret at Grenoble and Lyon, Pierre Caroli at Paris, and Pierre de Sébiville at Lyon.¹⁹ But mounting pressure from conservatives, especially after Marguerite left for Spain in the late summer of 1525 to negotiate François I's release, led to the arrest or flight of all these preachers, including the Fabrists at Meaux. Lefèvre, Roussel, and d'Arande escaped to Strasbourg, where they received protection from Marguerite's distant German cousin, Sigismund von Hohenlohe, a cathedral canon and leader of the reformation there.

In 1525, while conservatives were crushing the nascent evangelical movement, Marguerite seized, improbably, on François's own defeat as an opportunity to revive the cause. She attempted to convince him that God had imposed his "purgatory" (captivity) in order to transform him into an instrument for the restoration of the Church. François I was, it seems, potentially receptive to a spiritual interpretation of his plight. After his capture, evidently dejected, he began a Lenten penitential fast. Sensing his need, Marguerite asked François's boon companion, Anne de Montmorency, to give him her copy of Lefèvre's New Testament translation and to relate to him this prophesy: a holy "recluse" had told her

que s'y plaist au Roy par manière d'oraison, tous les jours, quand il sera retiré, lire les épistres de Saint-Pol, il est asseuré qu'il [François] sera délivré à la gloire de Dieu et l'honneur de luy; car il promet en son évangile que qui aime la vérité, la vérité le délivrera. Et pour ce que je pense qu'il n'en a point, vous envoie les miennes, vous priant le supplier de ma part qu'il les veuille lire, et je croy fermement que le Saint-Esperit, qui es demouré en la lettre, fera par luy chouses ainsy grandes comme il a faict par ceulx qui les ont escriptes.²⁰

In May, Marguerite told François explicitly that his imprisonment was a spiritual trial through which God sought to win his heart and turn him into a champion of the faith:

Je vous supplie, Monseigneur, croire sans riens en douter que ce [captivity] n'est que pour esprouver combien vous l'aimez, et pour vous donner le loisir de penser et connoistre combien il vous aime; car il veult avoir votre cueur entièrement, comme par amour vous a donné le sien, pour après vous avoir uny à luy par tribulations, vous desliver à sa gloire et vostre consolacion

¹⁹ For examples of network members praising Marguerite's leadership, see Sébiville's letter cited in note 6 and the letters cited in *KS*, pp. 45–46, 300–04.

²⁰ Marguerite to Anne de Montmorency, 3 March 1525, F. Génin, ed., *Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême, sœur de François I, reine de Navarre* (Paris, 1841), pp. 177–78, no 26 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 208).

par le mérite de sa victorieuse résurreccion, afin que par vous son nom soit congnu et sanctifié, non seulement en vostre réaulme, mais par toute la cristienté jusques à la conversion des infideles. O que bienheureuse sera vostre brefve prison, par qui Dieu tant d'ames deslivrera de celle d'infidélité et esternelle damnacion!²¹

When Marguerite arrived in Spain in August to negotiate his release, she found her brother deathly ill and had the Eucharist celebrated in his presence. Marguerite induced the half-conscious François to look at the sacramental elements, and when he expressed the wish to communicate, had a fraction of the host given to him while she received the rest. François's rapid recovery over the following days was considered by observers to be an evident "miracle."²² Although she failed ultimately to secure François's freedom, courtiers universally gave credit, after God, to Marguerite for saving the king's life.²³ Within days of his recovery, she reminded François of her hope that he would restore God's ruined Church:

Votre petite main [Marguerite] . . . va suplyer Celluy qui a coumandé à saint
Francoys d'aler reparer son esglize destruite vous donner grace d'estre cel-
luy par quy y parfera son euvre au bien de tous le[s] cristiens.²⁴

It appears, however, that Marguerite failed to win François over to her vision of him as the restorer of Christendom. François I wrote ten meditative poems during his captivity.²⁵ In these cathartic expressions of anguish, he voices a number of deep regrets, but finds solace only in the fact that his honor remains intact:

Cœur resolu d'autre chose n'a cure
Que de l'honneur.
Le corps vaincu, le cœur reste vainqueur,
.....
Doncq' je concluds qu'eureuse est l'entreprise
Qui rend fortune indigne de surprise
Par fermeté, qui vault bien qu'on la prise,
Or en jugez.²⁶

²¹ Marguerite to François I, [May 1525, Lyon], F. Génin, ed., *Nouvelles lettres de la reine de Navarre, adressées au roi François I^{er}, son frère* (Paris, 1842), pp. 32–33, no 5 (Reid, "Additions," no 219).

²² Jean de Selve to the Parlement of Paris, Toledo, 1 October 1525, in Aimé Champollion-Figeac, ed., *Captivité de François I^{er}* (Paris, 1847), pp. 331–33, no 158.

²³ Champollion-Figeac, *Captivité*, pp. 346–47, no 171 and pp. 356–57, no 179.

²⁴ Raymond Ritter, ed., *Lettres de Marguerite de Valois-Angoulême* (Paris, 1927), p. 7, no 7 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 260).

²⁵ François I^{er}, *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. J. E. Kane (Geneva, 1984), pp. 148–77.

²⁶ François I^{er}, *Œuvres poétiques*, Prison 8, p. 173, vv. 23–25, 29–32.

Nowhere does he echo Marguerite's religious exegesis of his experience. His heart remained unconquered.

Nevertheless, Marguerite did convince him, in November 1525, to order the Parlement to suspend heresy proceedings against the Meaux group.²⁷ When François emerged from captivity in 1526, he quashed the "fâcheries" which touched "her honor" so closely.²⁸ Over the next four years, she also persuaded François to grant ex-Meaux campaigners offices: Michel d'Arande was named bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Lefèvre became tutor to the royal children, who were under Marguerite's guardianship, and Gérard Roussel, whom she took as almoner, received the abbey of Clairac. Yet until 1530, while François's two eldest sons remained in his place in captivity, she could not convince him to allow evangelical preaching at court or in the realm, since the resulting controversy would have undermined his relations with the pope, whose aid he needed to secure their release (KS, pp. 345–50).

The Quest for Religious Concord in the 1530s and 1540s

Marguerite seized on new developments in the international political arena during the 1530s and 1540s as opportunities to induce François I to adopt foreign policies favorable to the evangelical cause. In 1531, German Protestant princes and cities formed a powerful defensive alliance, the Schmalkald League. In 1533, Henry VIII broke with Rome.

From 1533 to 1535, Marguerite and her partners at court, Jean and Guillaume Du Bellay, convinced François I to pursue a new, ambitious anti-Hapsburg policy. They proposed to draw the schismatic English king, the Schmalkald League, and, remarkably, even the pope into a military alliance with France based on religious concord that would resolve outstanding theological and ecclesiological divisions. As the means to promoting this union, they sought to bring Philipp Melanchthon and other tractable Protestant reformers to France for a religious colloquy.²⁹

Marguerite was arguably the leading architect of this plan. She had laid the groundwork for the venture by pursuing the lines of communication to Evangelicals in the Empire that the Meaux group had established in the

²⁷ *Catalogue des actes de François I^{er}*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1887–1908), 5:736, no 18505.

²⁸ Marguerite to François I, [end of 1525] (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 319, p. 70, with text of letter); Marguerite to François, [before 18 March 1526], Génin, *Nouvelles lettres*, p. 77, no 35 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 347); and Marguerite to Anne de Montmorency, [end of 1526], Génin, *Lettres*, pp. 219–21, no 34 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 362).

²⁹ For the following as well as Marguerite's sustained connection with the English court from 1533 to 1535, which will not be treated below, see KS, pp. 436–46.

early 1520s. After their seven-month sojourn in 1525–26 with her cousin Sigismund von Hohenlohe at Strasbourg, Marguerite maintained ties with him; he sent her French translations of works by Luther in the late 1520s and visited the French court.³⁰ Meanwhile, the Du Bellay brothers cultivated a group of German students at the University of Paris, including Johann Sturm and Ulrich Chelius, who were in contact with German reformers. They would serve as the Du Bellays' operatives well into the 1550s.

When the German "Protestants"—those princes and city magistrates who had protested Charles V's anti-heresy policy at the 1529 Diet of Speyer—headed to the pivotal Diet of Augsburg in August 1530 to present their confessions of faith, Marguerite saw clearly that the fate of the evangelical cause in France rested in part on its success in the Empire. At her express order, members of her network sent letters to Martin Bucer, a leading reformer from Strasbourg, urging him to encourage the Protestants to present a united front lest their divisions undermine the cause in France.³¹ At a time when France lacked diplomatic representation in the Empire, Marguerite displayed remarkable knowledge of imperial politics as well as perspicacious foresight. It was upon the basic premise she articulated in August 1530 that she and the Du Bellay brothers broached future overtures to German Protestants in the 1530s and 1540s: by collaborating they could help each other politically against the emperor and advance their common religious cause.

In 1531, François sent observers to the founding of the Protestants' military alliance at Schmalkalden. In May 1532, ambassadors of two leading members of the League, the elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse, who had come to secure financial aid for the conquest of Württemberg, presented themselves at court first to Marguerite, indicating the Protestants were responding to her calls for cooperation.³² While we cannot, for

³⁰ See Nicolas Gerbel to Martin Luther, Strasbourg, [2] April 1527, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar, 1930–85), 4:187–90, no 1093 [hereafter *WA, Br*].

³¹ Martin Bucer to Philipp Melancthon: "Accepimus nuper literas a fratribus ex Galliis, qui scribunt admodum feliciter apud se Evangelium gliscere, sed ita cursui ejus obstare infelix hoc nostrum dissidium, ut, nisi componatur, haud sperent unquam futurum ut Galliae Evangelium publicitus audiant. . . . Hac ergo de causa, fratres qui illic sunt . . . persancte nos hortati sunt, idque jussu reginae Navarrae, ut quam liceat diligentem operam demus, ut hoc tandem dissidium sopiatur, in quo certe ultrò currentibus calcar addiderunt," Herminjard, *Correspondance*, 2:271–72, no 305.

³² [May 1532], Marguerite to Montmorency, "Mon neveu le duc de sax [Saxe] et langrave des [*sic* for 'de Hesse'] ont icy envoyé leurs ambassadeurs pour affaires de telle importance que vous le scaurez bien considerer. Et pource qu'ilz se sont adressez à moy

lack of insider sources, fix Marguerite's or the Du Bellays' precise contribution over the next three years in orchestrating concord with the German Protestants, it is clear that if Guillaume Du Bellay was the lead negotiator, Marguerite was also a major force. The landgrave of Hesse wrote to Marguerite three times in 1534, just as Guillaume Du Bellay was making the first inquiries about the possibility of religious union.³³ From the Saxon side, Melanchthon wrote to her twice in 1533–34.³⁴

Moreover, it was precisely Marguerite's bold initiatives to legitimate the evangelical movement on the domestic front from 1533 to 1535 at Paris and beyond that convinced Melanchthon and German Evangelicals that she and her allies at court had real influence over the king and hence of the seriousness of French proposals. During Lent 1533, Marguerite had her almoner, Gérard Roussel, preach with the king's blessing at the Louvre. His sermons attracted crowds of thousands. In July 1533, Melanchthon heard an encouraging report that, despite having been accused of heresy, Roussel and other ministers would be allowed to defend evangelical doctrine (*doctrinam evangelicam*) in a public debate with Paris theologians before a board of sympathetic judges, including Jean Du Bellay.³⁵ Similarly, Marguerite's and the Du Bellay brothers' success in mitigating the conservatives' sweeping persecutions in Paris following Nicolas Cop's All Saint's Day sermon of 1533 and the posting of anti-Mass placards in October 1534 convinced Melanchthon in 1535 that the king's heart was still "in the hands of the Lord" and that his visit to France might lead to full-scale evangelical renewal.³⁶ Even after French negotiations with the Schmalkald League finally broke down in December 1535 and conservatives, led by Anne de Montmorency, became dominant at court, Protestants continued to ask Marguerite for help in convincing François to end the persecution of Evangelicals in France and to revive closer relations with them.³⁷

et que je n'entens pas bien leur langage ce porteur m'a servy de truchement lequel je vous envoie pour vous describer leurs dictz," Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 3036, fol. 13 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 560).

³³ Reid, "Additions," nos 584.4, 584.5, and 584.6.

³⁴ Reid, "Additions," no 1110 (redated to c.22 July 1533) and Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 597.

³⁵ Urbanus Rhegius to Philipp Melanchthon, 8 July 1533, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe, Regesten* (12 vols. to date) and *Texte* (11 vols. to date), ed. Heinz Scheible (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1991–), *Texte*, 5:459, no 1344, ll. 10–22.

³⁶ See Martin Bucer's report to Ambrosius Blarer, in *Briefwechsel der Brüder Ambrosius und Thomas Blaurer, 1509–1548*, ed. Traugott Schieß, 2 vols. (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1908–10), 1:469, no 396; Johann Sturm from Paris to Philipp Melanchthon, 6 March 1535, Herminjard, *Correspondance*, 3:266–71, no 498, and Sturm to Martin Bucer, 10 March 1535, p. 272, no 499.

³⁷ KS, p. 440 n. 166 and Reid, "Additions," nos 605.1, 10053, and 10055.

During a period of growing factional strife at court, 1540–47,³⁸ Marguerite worked with allies to revive the same pro-evangelical diplomacy that she had scripted in the 1520s and advanced again in the 1530s with the Du Bellay brothers. During two favorable periods—1540–43 and 1545–47—she, Philippe Chabot de Brion (until his death in 1543), Jean Du Bellay, and, above all, Mme d'Étampes, the king's increasingly influential mistress,³⁹ struggled, often secretly in order to bypass conservatives who held sway at court, to convince François to ally with the German Protestants and England.⁴⁰

During the 1540s, François's quest to win Milan from the emperor fell into three phases, which dictated the pace and the scope of Marguerite's and her allies' efforts. In the first, 1540–43, following Montmorency's failure to induce Charles V to come to terms for Milan, Marguerite supported plans to marry her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, to a major opponent of Charles's power in the Empire: the duke of Cleves-Jülich. Cleves, a wavering Catholic, was allied to his brother-in-law, the elector of Saxony, and thereby closely connected to the princes of the Protestant Schmalkald League. The duke was also on good terms with Henry VIII, who was married, briefly, to his sister Anne in 1540. Marguerite knew as early as October 1538 that an alliance with the duke of Cleves offered France an opportunity for union with German Protestants.⁴¹ Despite her husband's opposition, Marguerite made an Abrahamic sacrifice: although it was detrimental to Navarre's dynastic interests, from 1540 through 1542 she helped to engineer the marriage and attempted to build from it an alliance between France and the German Protestants as well as, potentially, England. In pursuit of this goal, she exchanged over 30 letters with the duke and his advisors. To the same end, she sent a further 20 letters to his

³⁸ David L. Potter, "Politics and Faction at the Court of Francis I: The Duchesse d'Étampes, Montmorency and the Dauphin Henri," *French History* 21 (2007), 127–46 (pp. 130, 143, 146); Robert J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge, Eng., 1994), pp. 483–86.

³⁹ Marguerite told the English ambassador in February 1540 that she had to work through her ally, Mme d'Étampes, in order to fix ideas in her brother's hard head; see John Sherren Brewer et al., eds., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 21 vols. (London, 1862–1910), 15:79–80, no 223.

⁴⁰ For the following, see KS, pp. 497–516. Only supplemental data will be cited.

⁴¹ See the letters of [Johann Sturm] and Johannes Sleidan to [Jean Du Bellay], 14 October [1538], and of Sleidan to Jean Du Bellay, 27 October 1538, *Correspondance du cardinal Jean Du Bellay*, ed. Rémy Scheurer, 5 vols. (Paris, 1969–2012), 3:134–36 and 138–40, nos 551 and 553.

German Protestant allies, including the elector of Saxony and the duke of Hesse.⁴² Evangelical courtiers aided her. In May 1540, Guillaume Du Bellay wrote to the German Protestants telling them that the time was ripe to ally with France against the emperor.⁴³ Recognizing the importance of the proposed Cleves-d'Albret marriage, Philipp Melanchthon responded to Du Bellay and advertised to Protestant princes that Cleves's betrothal to the "daughter of the Queen of Navarre" boded well for a religious and political accord with France.⁴⁴ In turn, Luther (or Melanchthon) wrote to Marguerite to urge her to continue to advance the cause of the gospel at court.⁴⁵ Responding to such hopes, soon after the marriage was celebrated (June 1541), Marguerite wrote to Jean Calvin asking him to tell his Protestant friends that she and her husband were very happy with the union and believed that great good would come of it for the evangelical cause.⁴⁶

In 1542, Marguerite, Philippe Chabot, and Mme d'Étampes attempted to draw Henry VIII into a broad anti-imperial, anti-papal league with the Protestants and France, an alliance they proposed to seal by the marriage of Henry's daughter, Elizabeth, with François's second son, Charles d'Orléans. Calling the emperor "Hypocrisy" and the pope "the Devil," Marguerite and Philippe Chabot predicted to the English that great benefits would come to Christendom from the three-way union.⁴⁷

Henry VIII entertained but ultimately rejected these overtures and allied with the emperor (February 1543), precipitating the second phase of France's foreign relations in the 1540s. During their combined campaign in 1543, the emperor easily defeated the duke of Cleves because his allies, François I and the German Protestant Princes, failed to support him

⁴² Marguerite and Jean Du Bellay regularly apprised German Protestants of their confessionally colored power struggles at court. For instance, Marguerite informed Protestants attending the 1542 imperial diet of her and Mme d'Étampes's efforts to get rid of the "reformationsfeindlichen französischen Kanzlers [Poyet]" and replace him with Marguerite's "gelehrt und evangelisch gesinnt" chancellor of Alençon, François Olivier. See Franz Burchard to Philipp Melanchthon, Speyer, 11 March, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel, Texte*, 11:99–100, no 2908.

⁴³ V.-L. Bourrilly, "Lazare de Bayf et le Landgrave de Hesse," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 50 (1901), 369–76 (pp. 373–75).

⁴⁴ See Melanchthon's letters from 1540 in *Melanchthons Briefwechsel, Texte*, vol. 9 (= *Regesten*, vol. 3), nos 2507, 2510, 2511, 2526; and further, nos 2341, 2575, 3194, and 3270.

⁴⁵ *WA, Br*, 9:299–301, no 3565.

⁴⁶ 25 July [1525], Herminjard, *Correspondance*, 7:198–202, no 1017 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 851).

⁴⁷ Marguerite and Chabot made these declarations privately to the English ambassador, William Paget, a man who was systematically skeptical of their covert offers of confessional allegiance. See *KS*, pp. 497–98.

sufficiently.⁴⁸ Cleves's capitulation to the emperor in September 1543 severed the link he had formed between France and the German Protestants and Marguerite immediately sought the annulment of her daughter's marriage.⁴⁹ During the hostilities, England took Boulogne from France. The following year the emperor's further battlefield victories forced François to accept humiliating terms. The Treaty of Crépy (September 1544) required François I to give up the territories he had won, to aid the emperor in crushing the Protestants, and to agree to support a Church council (Trent) in exchange for the emperor's offer to marry one of his female relations to Charles d'Orléans with Milan as dowry. These outcomes effectively checked the French evangelical faction's campaign to build a political and religious alliance with the Protestants.

Marguerite and Mme d'Étampes began almost immediately to resurrect the alliance scheme. Starting in late 1544, they had the Du Bellay brothers' operatives in Strasbourg make a secret overture to Henry VIII. They told him that if he would accept a large but reasonable settlement from François for Boulogne, they could end the war and build toward a confessional and military union between France, England, and the Schmalkald League.⁵⁰ In 1545, the situation became more favorable as François grew impatient with the emperor for failing to invest Charles d'Orléans with Milan and especially after the duke's sudden death in late 1545 effectively voided the Treaty of Crépy. With Mme d'Étampes taking the lead—she promised to be able to induce François to break with Rome—and Marguerite seconding her, the two women at last convinced Henry to come to terms (The Peace of Ardres, June 1546), but they were unable, yet again, to tempt him to join a broad anti-imperial and anti-papal alliance. When Charles V began his campaign against the Schmalkald League in 1546, they were, however, able to persuade François to contribute to the Protestants' war coffers. In the meantime, François called Marguerite to court. The meaning of his summons was clear to the English: "The Queen of Navarre is sent for, and therefore the Protestants' matter is likely to prosper."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Brady, *Protestant Politics*, pp. 148, 254–57.

⁴⁹ In October 1543, she asked François for help. Recognizing the necessity of obtaining the pope's agreement, she reserved to God the true right to grant an annulment and the surety of knowing that He had granted it to herself: "je vous supplie très humblement nous ayder à la mettre en liberté devant l'église et les hommes, comme je say qu'elle l'est devant Dieu," Génin, *Nouvelles lettres*, p. 237, no 133 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 951).

⁵⁰ Jean Du Bellay exchanged dozens of letters from 1545 to 1547 with his German operatives Johann Sturm, Ulrich Geiger, and Johannes Sleidan in support of this plan. See *Correspondance du cardinal Jean Du Bellay*, vol. 3.

⁵¹ Wotton to Paget, 30 December 1530, *Letters and Papers*, 21–2:324, no 648.

Yet Henry VIII refused to help and Marguerite failed to reach court before François died on 31 March 1547.⁵² French financial support was too little and came too late to enable the Protestants to escape defeat at Mühlberg in 1547.

While pursuing these political gambits in the 1540s, Marguerite intensified her campaign to convert her brother to an evangelical *foy vive* and to convince him to reform the realm accordingly. We see her efforts most clearly in a series of intimate religious poems she exchanged with him—ten from her, three from him—during the period 1540 to 1547.⁵³ In one remarkable poem, written between 1541 and 1543, we find Marguerite responding to François's account, which is not extant, of his own recent spiritual awakening. She rejoices that he has finally experienced, as she had long hoped, a heart-wrenching conversion which led him to deny his own merits and trust solely in the grace of Christ for salvation:

Puis que voz yeulx [sont] remplis d'aulture lumiere,

.....

Que maintenant le [Christ] voyez en son estre

Tel qu'il estoit, voire devant son naistre:

Puis que du tout l'ignorance est rompue,

Dont trop long temps vostre ame fust repeue,

.....

Puis que le cœur monde, pur et nouveau

Donné vous est, et créé trop plus beau,

.....

Pouvez gecter un cry à mon advis,

Disant "C'est Christ et non plus moy qui veis":

.....

Moy qui ay tant désiré ceste chose,

Qui un tel bien vous ay tant désiré,

Et devant Dieu en priant souspiré

Vouloir voz yeulx trop endormis ouvrir,

Et sa beaulté secrecte descouvrir.

.....

Mais vous, plourez sentant la joye extreme,

Qui vient d'aymer son dieu plus que soy mesme.⁵⁴

⁵² Mme d'Étampes and Jean Du Bellay awaited her arrival impatiently. For unknown reasons, she halted her journey. See Jean Du Bellay to [Anne de Pisseleu], 13 January [1547], *Correspondance du cardinal Jean Du Bellay*, 3:407–08, no 735.

⁵³ Richard Cooper reconstructed this poetic dialogue for the first time by redating and publishing Marguerite's occasional poems and her brother's responses in OC 8.

⁵⁴ OC 8, Épître 8, pp. 143–51, vv. 1, 5–8, 13–14, 17–18, 22–26, 117–18.

She predicts not only that he will be freed from his worldly affections, but also that he will go on to do great things because of his new-found faith:

Puis envers tous, amys ou ennemys,
 Vous employrés ainsi qu'il [Dieu] le demande,

 Ainsi vivant en luy par son esprit,
 Soit en pensant, ouvrant, ou par escript,

 Vous luy plairés en tous voz sacrifices,
 Communicquant à tous ces benefices:
 Et, si par foy en luy puis esperer,
 Ainsi que vous de luy ne separer. (ibid., vv. 211–12, 220–21, 223–26)

Marguerite also notes that God would demand action of François, but she explicitly draws back from specifying what reform measures he should take:

J'auray plaisir, soit en dict ou en fait,
 Qui ne tiendra plus rien de l'imparfait.
 Quel y sera vous le pouvez penser.
 D'en dire tant vous me debvez tencer,
 Mais le propos par dessus moy me maine. (ibid., vv. 227–31)

In a subsequent series of New Year's Day poems from 1543 through 1545, in which she likens François in turn to David, Christ, Abraham, and Solomon, Marguerite proclaims that God will make him victorious because of his faith and enable him to root out heresy and superstition, and thus reform and reunite the Church.⁵⁵ Just as she had done during his captivity in 1525, Marguerite told François in these poems that his personal transformation would earn him God's favor in his dynastic struggles and turn him into God's instrument for a national, and even international, reformation of the faith and the Church. Unlike in 1525, however, François evidently accepted Marguerite's spiritual guidance in some measure. In response, he protests that he is not, as she had described him, a David, but rather, echoing her more fundamental teaching, an abject sinner:

⁵⁵ See the epigraph to this essay and OC 8, *Épître* 10, [January 1543], pp. 156–61, esp. vv. 85–95; *Épître* 11, [November 1543], pp. 165–71, esp. vv. 61–68; *Épître* 12, [January 1544], pp. 172–77; *Oraison* 8, [February 1544], pp. 326–28.

Point je ne suis au bon David semblable,
 De qui le cœur à Dieu fust agreable,
 Je suis pecheur, et cela je confesse,
 Dont le congnoistre est ma seure radresse.

.....

Je prie à Dieu qui a en son pouvoir
 Tout nostre bien, qu'il y vueille pourveoir,
 Estant beaucoup envers nous plus propice
 Que ne dessert nostre grande malice.⁵⁶

He also accepted Marguerite's notion that God would bless him materially because he had confessed to being a sinner and wholly dependent upon God for salvation:

Louenge à toy, O infiny donneur,
 Mon seul salut et mon certain sçavoir.
 Tu m'as donné, dont je te rendz l'honneur:
 Conqueste, enfans, et defense et pouvoir.⁵⁷

If François I had experienced a spiritual awakening in the early 1540s under Marguerite's guidance, as these poems seem to indicate, the fact remains that he did not go on to implement domestic policies in favor of religious renewal like those Marguerite and her allies at court were advocating. If anything, royal religious policy became harsher and the number of heresy executions increased during the final years of his reign.⁵⁸ One reason for these trends is that most of the highly competent men whom François I chose as his chief advisors, including Duprat, Montmorency, Bayard, Poyet, Tournon, and d'Annebault, were quite orthodox. They secured the upper hand in shaping the crown's religious policy at the expense of Marguerite and the evangelically inclined at court, whose ranks were thinned by death (Guillaume Du Bellay, †1543; Philippe Chabot, †1543; and Charles d'Orléans, †1545) or disgrace (Jean Du Bellay, 1545).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ So he confesses in his 1543 New Year's Day response to Marguerite, *OC* 8, *Épître* 10, pp. 156–61 and pp. 162–64, vv. 11–14 and 73–76 for verses quoted.

⁵⁷ *OC* 8, *Oraison* 8, pp. 326–28 (p. 327, vv. 25–28).

⁵⁸ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 508–16; N. M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven, 1980), pp. 27–39, 335–40; and William E. Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

⁵⁹ For these figures and the balance of power at court, see Cédric Michon, ed., *Les Conseillers de François I^{er}* (Rennes, 2011), esp. pp. 457ff.

The Evangelical Network and Domestic Reform

As hard as she worked for a court-directed reform of the Church, Marguerite arguably worked even harder, and certainly had greater effect, in promoting renewal at the local level. She used her seigniorial powers and above all her influence over her brother to build the movement by placing scores of protégés in positions of influence and by protecting dozens of its proponents from persecution as heretics. Through these efforts Marguerite helped to build a network of evangelical communities first at Meaux and at court, then in locales where she had influence—her seigniorial territories of Alençon, Bourges, Berry, and Béarn, as well as Paris, Toulouse, Orléans, and Nîmes. Her successes in championing at court Jean and Guillaume Du Bellay as well as her chancellor of Alençon, François Olivier (who became chancellor of France in place of the conservative Poyet), head a long list of notable and lesser preferments including Jacques Groslot as bailli d'Orléans, Arnaud de Badet and Louis de Rochette successively as inquisitors at Toulouse, Claude Baduel as rector of the University of Nîmes, a series of masters and clerics in the university and churches of Bourges, Antonio Caracciolo as abbot of Saint-Victor in Paris, and Gérard Roussel as bishop of Oloron. Notably, all of the cities where Marguerite installed such figures developed strong evangelical communities from which would emerge, in the decade after her death, Reformed Churches.⁶⁰

Marguerite also sought to protect such individuals and communities whenever they were persecuted. The most prominent figures after the Meaux group for whom she intervened include, in chronological order: the preachers Aimé Meigret and Pierre de Sébiville, the hermit of Livry Jean Guibert, the courtier Louis de Berquin, the court poet Clément Marot, Jean Du Bellay, the rector of the University of Paris Nicolas Cop, Jean Calvin, the neo-Latin poet Nicolas Bourbon, the preacher Pierre de Nuptiis, the jurist scholar Jean Boysonné, the preacher Jean Michel, Antonio Caracciolo, and the school master André Melanchthon, the reputed nephew of Philipp Melanchthon. As she had on behalf of the Meaux group, she attempted to save evangelical cells persecuted for heresy and, when she failed, succored the victims and their relatives by taking them into her household or providing for them financially. These groups included: surviving members of a university-based fellowship crushed at Toulouse in

⁶⁰ For details about Marguerite's connections to these persons, events, and locales, see KS *passim* via the index and an overview, pp. 69–84.

1532, the Waldensian communities abused by the inquisitor Jean de Roma at Aix in 1533, 40 persons indicted for heresy in her ducal seat of Alençon from 1533 to 1534, the scores of auditors and followers of Gérard Roussel and Nicolas Cop incarcerated at Paris in 1533 and 1534 in the wake of their sermons and again after the *affaire des placards*, members of Rénée de France's household in Ferrara oppressed by the duke in the mid-1530s, as well as the members of her own household scrutinized by the Parlement of Bordeaux in 1542. When shielding this last group, Marguerite repeated to François her usual defense in such cases: conservatives, the "forgers of heretics," were laying false evidence and persecuting the truly faithful unjustly:

Dieu merci, Monseigneur, nul des nostres n'ont esté trouvés sacramentaires... et ne me puis garder de vous dire qu'il vous souviengne de l'opinion que j'avois que les vilains placars estoient faits par ceux qui les cherchent aux aultres.⁶¹

Interestingly, unlike Clément Marot and other evangelical authors who described their suffering for the sake of religion and praised Marguerite for her protection, she only hints at her career-long efforts to foster such evangelical communities and to foil 'counter-Reformation' persecution of them in two of her minor poetic works—"Prince eternal, qui congnoys nos miseres"⁶² and *Complainte pour un detenu prisonnier*—and in her unpublished play, *L'Inquisiteur*. This curious silence leads us to our final considerations: How, or in what ways, was she an *engagée* reformation writer? What can Marguerite's writings tell us about her reformation agenda?

III. *Author among Evangelical Authors*

Marguerite was a prolific writer yet she published little during most of her long career. This noteworthy fact complicates our understanding of her as a Reformation-era author. From the early 1520s to the end of her life, she composed scores of works, most of them religious meditations, but she made public only four thin volumes of her poems until 1547 when, shortly

⁶¹ Génin, *Nouvelles lettres*, p. 196, no 114 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 903). When trying to save Louis de Berquin in 1529, she argued similarly to François: "j'espère que la vérité qu'il [Berquin] fera apparoir rendre les forgeurs d'hérétiques plus maldisans et désobéissants à vous que zélateurs de la foy," *ibid.*, p. 97, no 51 (Jourda, *Répertoire*, no 434).

⁶² OC 8, Oraison 6, p. 324. Cf. the rondeau closing this essay.

after the death of her brother, she re-edited these titles with a selection of her unpublished writings in the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*.⁶³ Her first published work, *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, was threatened with censure by the Paris Faculty of Theology in 1533. Only after she had lost influence at court and, seemingly, had little else to lose, did she decide to publish again in a major way. Even so, she did not have printed her longest and potentially most controversial religious works, which she completed shortly after her brother's death, *Les Prisons* and *La Navire*. The most compelling conclusion we can draw from the chronology of her publishing career is that the threat of persecution and scandal, which shaped the lives of her many protégés as well as her actions at court, also constrained decisions about which of her works to publish and when to do so. Thus, while from our modern perspective, with all of her works in hand, she appears to have been a major Reformation-era author, in her own day until 1547, she was publicly only a minor one. She did circulate at court, however, many compositions in manuscript, including the exchange of religious verse epistles with her brother, as part of her efforts to secure influence and promote her religious and political agenda. In 1541, she had a presentation manuscript of *La Coche* made for Mme d'Étampes and in 1542 ladies at court staged her *Comédie des quatre femmes*. She may also have circulated early versions of some of her *Heptaméron* stories since, as she claims in its prologue, Henri II and other courtiers had given her the idea for the work. Given the prominent mentions of Henri II in the *Prisons*, *Navire*, and *Comédie sur le trépas du roi*, Marguerite seemingly intended to curry the new king's favor via these reflections on his father's life and faith, which she depicted as decidedly evangelical. If so, no evidence has come to light that she ever presented them to her nephew.

More importantly, the content of her literary works, including other unpublished works such as her versification of Luther's exposition of the *Pater Noster*, offers intriguing but problematic evidence for speculating about what sort of reformed Church she aspired to and was, as illustrated above, desperately fighting for in the face of conservatives' increasingly severe repression of heresy. As she declared in the preface she wrote for the 1533 reprints (Paris, Antoine Augereau) of the *Miroir* and reused to

⁶³ Marguerite's secretary obtained a privilege for the *Marguerites* from the Parlement of Bordeaux on 29 March 1547, that is, two days before François I's death, indicating that she had planned to publish before his demise, though perhaps in expectation of it since she knew he was gravely ill; see Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:313–14.

head the *Marguerites*, she aimed simply in her writings at inculcating piety and an undogmatic living faith. She was not writing programmatic treatises about doctrine and reform agendas, let alone polemics. Indeed, she could not have published such works even if she had wanted to. Despite her elevated station, the Parisian theologians, who rightly suspected that she deviated from their faith, would not have allowed her to do so as a woman and a layperson. Therefore, her compositions offer material ill-suited to speculating about her confessional stripes, that is, for surmising to which of the then competing Churches or confessions she would have openly professed her allegiance were she able to do so.

In face of the interpretive difficulties presented by her works, it is essential to realize that while Marguerite did not publish much, she patronized several dozen evangelical authors and printers who did. This support was arguably her greatest literary contribution to Reformation discourse. Collectively, her protégés published over 500 Latin and French works and penned scores of other texts that remained in manuscript, all of which more or less directly engaged in the religious debate.⁶⁴ Notably, in lockstep with her own publishing career, this body of literature exhibits a great caesura—a fundamental shift in character—around 1534 as the conservatives' campaign of persecution made it increasingly risky to publish dissenting ideas. Before 1534, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Louis de Berquin, and other members of Marguerite's network published a sizeable corpus of biblical, catechetical, devotional, and exegetical works, including Lefèvre's complete French translation of the Bible (Antwerp, 1530) and dozens of translations of catechetical works by German reformers. Most of these titles were printed anonymously or with false attributions of author or printer. This semi-clandestine enterprise was hazardous. The Paris Faculty of Theology censured most of these works and authors. After the crack-down following the *affaire des placards*, the publication of prescriptive evangelical texts ceased in France and moved to foreign printing centers. The four printers who had produced almost all of these books and tracts were silenced: Simon Du Bois (Paris and Alençon, vanished 1534), Antoine Augereau (Paris, executed as a heretic December 1534), Martin de Keyser (Antwerp, died 1535), and Pierre de Vingle (Lyon, emigrated 1533).

Starting in the early 1530s, Marguerite presided over a literary turn in evangelical publication. A closely knit community of over 20 authors

⁶⁴ See KS, Appendix B, and pp. 274–93 for the launching of this publishing campaign in 1525.

patronized by Marguerite and the Du Bellay brothers, including Clément Marot, François Rabelais, Charles de Sainte-Marthe, Nicolas Bourbon, and Étienne Dolet, commenced their publishing careers, some quite late in life, and changed the register of evangelical discourse. These “enfants d’Apollo,” as Marot dubbed his brother poets in his first work, *L’Adolescence clémentine* (1532), a publication which self-consciously launched this literary movement, collaborated intensely in and out of print. Daringly, they produced hundreds of verse and prose works—mostly, but not always, under their own names—which though not as often overtly religious, nor in the usual genres of religious writing, nevertheless expressed evangelical sentiments, doctrines, and, occasionally, polemics in an admixture of worldly themes.⁶⁵ Most of these authors eventually suffered censure or worse punishment, despite suppressing their most stridently controversial works and auto-censoring their published texts.

Scholars have not yet adequately assessed how the ever-present threat of persecution affected these authors—Marot and Rabelais are better studied—when they were writing on controversial religious topics. More importantly, although modern scholars like contemporary admirers and critics have recognized that these authors were part of a coordinated movement, we lack any synthetic study of their religious views and aspirations, let alone of the impact of their works on religious discourse in the university halls and the streets.

To conclude this survey and illustrate the value of such a collective study, the following will show how Marguerite’s doctrines and reform goals, which she expressed guardedly in her letters and writings, can be amplified and clarified by reading the texts of writers she patronized.⁶⁶ I will focus on two detailed expositions of faith that come from her immediate circle and most likely reflect her views. Hitherto, both have been little studied.⁶⁷ The first is a custom-made catechism and guide to auricular confession, made for Marguerite c.1530, entitled *L’Initiatore instruction*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ See KS, ch. 10 for a survey of this group and their works, their evangelical piety, and their polemics in favor of religious renewal.

⁶⁶ The fullest attempt to date to profile Marguerite’s thought on justification, faith, the Church, the saints, and the sacraments from her writings is Gary Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre’s Devotional Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1992).

⁶⁷ For the literature on and discussion of both texts, see KS, pp. 251–53 and 520ff.

⁶⁸ Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 5096. Emblazoned with Marguerite’s arms, this luxurious manuscript contains: (1) an augmented translation of two short catechisms by the Lutheran Johannes Brenz; (2) an anonymous treatise on confession, a slightly altered version of which Marguerite’s printer, Simon Du Bois, published in her city of Alençon c.1530; (3) a programmatic cycle of illustrations with penitential and Eucharistic themes;

The second is the sole surviving exposition of faith by her closest spiritual advisor from 1526 until her death, Gérard Roussel, the *Familière exposition*.⁶⁹

Scholars agree that leading French Evangelicals like Lefèvre d'Étaples, Marguerite, and Roussel shared with the Protestant reformers an overarching belief that sinners are justified by faith alone. In *Les Prisons*, Marguerite identifies this doctrine and *sola scriptura* as the key criteria for discriminating between good theologians and books and bad ones. The good "doctor" focuses solely on God's gift of faith as revealed in Scripture;⁷⁰ the bad one introduces damning doctrines not found in Holy Writ:

L'autre [docteur] duquel la doctrine est doubtable,
C'est cestuy là qui l'homme enorgueillit
Et qui l'excuse, encores qu'il faillist,
En luy donnant povoir, sçavoir, bonté,
Et que par luy peult bien estre dumpté
Le peché joint à nostre chair humaine,
Voire effacé par son labeur et peyne;
Ainsy le fait confier en son œuvre,

.....

En ces deux pointz gist la damnation:
D'attribuer nostre salvation,
Redemption, aux hommes en partie,
Et de luy seul, dont la vie est partie,
Ne croyre pas que du tout dependons
Affin que honneur à luy seul nous rendons. (vv. 1260–67, 1277–82)

Like Luther and many others, Marguerite particularly condemns the psychological trap set by bad doctors. However well meaning they may be, they lead sinners to damnation by puffing them up with self-confidence that they can contribute in any way ("en partie") to their salvation through their works (vv. 1283–91).

and (4) a concluding rondeau, which encourages a fraternal alliance of the elect suffering persecution to stand firm (quoted at the end of this essay). For Simon Du Bois's edition of the treatise on confession, see Eugénie Droz, *Chemins de l'hérésie*, 4 vols. (repr. Geneva, 1970–76), 1:59–77.

⁶⁹ Paris, BnF, fr. 419. This multipart manuscript contains: (1) Roussel's *Familière exposition*—a catechetical explanation of the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and Creed—a copy of which the Faculty of Theology condemned in 1550; (2) his treatise on the two sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist; (3) his principles for diocesan reform. The last is edited in Charles Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel: Prédicateur de la reine Marguerite de Navarre* (Strasbourg, 1845), pp. 226–39.

⁷⁰ "Mais pour juger des mauvais et des bons [docteurs] / Ce qui en est, fault que nous regardons / Qui le plus près de l'Escripture touche / Car l'Evangile est la pierre de touche," *Les Prisons*, Bk. 3, vv. 1229–32. Cf. story 44 in the *Heptaméron*.

Beyond voicing such blanket warnings, Marguerite rarely identified specific false doctors, books, or doctrines. The unpublished catechism compiled for her, however, asserts what neither she nor any other Evangelical in France could proclaim openly: the Roman pope and doctors of Paris were in the wrong. Concerning the remission of sins, the catechist explains:

Je ne croy point, et ne me confie aucunement aux fainctes et plaines de fraulde indulgences ou pardons du pape Romain, ne de ses scavoirs, mais je croy la remission des peches que Jesuschrist nous a par sa tressuffisante mort et passion impectrée.⁷¹

In a long excursus on the “traditions humaines” reigning “aujourd’huy,” the author condemns auricular confession to a priest as a diabolical invention designed to damn souls:

Qui n’aura creu en Jesuschrist mais aura mis sa confience et esperance en aultre chose, soit au ciel, soit en la terre, il sera damné. Vous voyes que l’escripture ne dict point, Celuy qui se sera confessé ainsi que l’eglise Romaine, ou la faculte de Paris, ou les hommes quelz qu’ils soient, l’auront commandé, sera saulvé, et qui ne l’aura faict sera damné. Ceste doctrine n’est point venue de Dieu, mais est doctrine de Diable, qui ne cherche synon que laissons la vraye et vifve parolle de Dieu et suyons la vaine parolle des hommes, affin que soions perdus.⁷²

How then should one confess? The catechist tells the confessant to admit his or her sinfulness first to God, then to any trusted fellow Christian.⁷³ Recognizing that, although it is a damnable invention, the confessant will be obliged to confess to a priest, the catechist gives a formula of what to say, which amounts to a general confession of faith rather than a model for confessing specific sins. The catechist admonishes the confessant to take the priest’s words of absolution only as an advertisement of God’s freely given forgiveness, not as a sacramental means by which forgiveness is conveyed. Furthermore, he advises the confessant do the penance imposed by the priest in order to avoid scandalizing others (“pour evicter scandale”), but warns:

⁷¹ Ars., 5096, fol. 25r. This attack on the pope’s indulgences, pardons, and “scavoirs” is a strident amplification by the translator of Brenz’s original, “Auch glaub ich nit in den Ablass des Bapsts sonder Iesu Christi.”

⁷² Ibid., fol. 39r–v; for another attack on Rome and Paris, see fol. 37r–v.

⁷³ Cf. *Heptaméron*, story 72, and Mary B. McKinley, “Telling Secrets: Sacramental Confession and Narrative Authority in the *Heptameron*,” in John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley, eds., *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptameron and Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 146–71.

gardes vous comme d'ung chien enragé, et sur le peril de votre ame, de penser que par ceste votre oeuvre ou aultre vous pourries satisfaire à la justice de Dieu pour voz peches. . . . Mieulx vous seroit de n'avoir oncq veu prebstre.⁷⁴

Signaling that there are false practices surrounding confession without denouncing them, Roussel similarly instructed his flock that God alone forgives sins and that it is from him only they should seek pardon. Nevertheless, he says, one would contravene God's will not to "use the means" he has ordained; the penitent should

se retirer au prebstre, [et] devant luy se recongoistre pécheur, s'accuser et confesser *pour obtenir par son organe et ministère la parole par laquelle est offerte et dispensée la rémission des péchez*, de laquelle Dieu en est l'autheur, et le prebstre seul dispensateur.⁷⁵

Roussel makes clear, however, that the penitent is confessing directly to God and that the priest, when pronouncing the words of absolution, is simply announcing, not granting, God's forgiveness, which the sinner can only receive through faith. Roussel omits any discussion of sacramental absolution, the debt of sin, merits (other than Christ's), imposed penance, purgatory, or the treasury of merits in his presentation of the essentials of sin, confession, and forgiveness.

No sacramental dispute divided Reformation-era Christians more deeply than that over the Eucharist. Marguerite's poems, correspondence, and deeds exhibit a strong devotion to the sacrament, corresponding to the Christocentric orientation of her piety. She evidently believed in Christ's real sacramental presence in the Eucharist, as is revealed in Pierre Doré's claim in 1539 that she boasted of burning a book by Zwingli on the Mass for denying it⁷⁶ and in the relief she expressed to François I in 1542 that no one in her household was Sacramentarian.⁷⁷ Like Roussel, however, she never specifies in any of her writings the mode of the real presence, nor adheres clearly to a specifically Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist formulation of it. Notably, Roussel, who largely followed Calvin's real-spiritualist interpretation as well as his liturgy for administering the Eucharist in both kinds, claimed that all "les abominations, abus, irrévérences, . . . les

⁷⁴ Ars. 5096, fol. 54r–55v; 55r. See further KS, pp. 367–68.

⁷⁵ BnF, fr. 419, fol. 179v, emphasis added; cf. KS, pp. 533–34.

⁷⁶ Noted by Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, "Pierre Doré: une stratégie de la reconquête," in Olivier Millet, ed., *Calvin et ses contemporains: Actes du colloque de Paris 1995* (Geneva, 1998), p. 185.

⁷⁷ See note 61.

discordes et débatz” surrounding the sacrament would fall away and the faithful be united if everyone would simply follow Jesus’s words and form of institution of the sacrament, without inquiring further into how he is present.⁷⁸

Roussel’s appeal for unity and the ending of abuses of the sacrament echoes Marguerite’s calls to her brother and other powers to reform and unify the Church or Christendom. Those calls for unity are what makes them so hard to “type” confessionally. Scholars’ attempts to do so ever since the 16th century by measuring their doctrinal statements against the benchmarks of the different confessions, however understandable the temptation may be, have often been anachronistic and, more importantly, have ignored their plight and expressed intentions. What Church were they seeking to uphold? Both Marguerite’s catechism and Roussel’s *Familiere exposition* define the Church as the body of Christ, nothing more, nothing less. Mystically, it is comprised of all the living elect in communion through Christ, including the saints of paradise. The visible Church, they maintained, is spread throughout the world and can be found wherever the gospel (doctrines of salvation) is rightly preached and the two sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, are celebrated in conformity with Scripture.⁷⁹ As Marguerite’s catechism explains:

Eglise, signifie congregation. *Quant doncques nous disons, Je croy la congregation, non pas ce monceau de boys et de pierres, ou la multitude des anti-christians, ministres, qui ne sont rien moins que union ou congregation, veu que chacun d’eulx veult estre differend de l’autre, tant en sentence, ou opinion, que en supersticieuses et hipocritiques ceremonies. Et quoy doncques? La compaignie totale du peuple de Dieu. C’est à dire des chrestiens qui sont le vray temple de Dieu, et qui tous jouxte le commandement de leur maistre, sentent une mesme chose, et demeurent en une mesme reigle, saichans que quiconques se retire d’unite, il se retire de Dieu.*⁸⁰

⁷⁸ BnF, fr. 419, fol. 168v; cf. KS, pp. 526–27 and 536–48.

⁷⁹ After defining the Church as the mystical body of Christ, Roussel specified, “Bien y a il une aultre Eglise de Dieu, visible, laquelle il nous descript avecques certains signes et nottes pour la nous faire congnoistre: comme sont la Parolle de Dieu et les sacrementz purement administrez; laquelle Parolle il veult par nous estre ouye, observée et suyvie . . . mais en cest article péculièrement et bien proprement est parlé de la congrégation des esleuz, de ceulx lesquelz Dieu, par son occult élection, a adoptez pour enfans et héritiers de salut, laquelle ne se voit de l’œil corporel, ny se congoist par signes, mais est seulement congneüe et appréhendée par foy,” BnF, fr. 419, fol. 23r. Roussel only elaborates on baptism and the Eucharist as sacraments instituted by Jesus in this work, fols. 145v–74r.

⁸⁰ Ars. 5096, fols. 23v–24r. The translator elaborates (in italics above) significantly on Brenz’s original text: “Quid dicitur ecclesia lingua nobis vernacula? Responsio. Congregatio, non illa quidem lignorum et lapidum, sed populi Dei,” Martin Luther, *Catechismus . . . Huic adiecti sunt alij quoque gemini Catechismi, Iohannis Brentij* (Haguenau, 1529), fol. R3r.

Marguerite, Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Roussel defined the true Church and its true ministers⁸¹ performatively not confessionally. Further, in identifying the true Church with true believers who could be found everywhere, they developed the principle that they should not reject any of the visible Churches or their members, lest they break the unity of the mystical Church and fail in their duty to enlighten the misguided within it, especially those persecuting them. In his explanation of the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "deliver us from evil," Roussel advises the elect to pity and pray for those who torment them:

reconnoistre seul pour ennemy [le Diable], et prendre les hommes desquelz il s'ayde pour nous faire mal, non pour ennemys mais comme pouvres captifz et prisonniers, voire détenuz en très misérable et dangereuse captivité, est le vray moyen pour bien user de la présente formule et dire d'un ardent désir, tant pour nous que pour noz prochains: "O Père, délivre nous du maling."⁸²

Moreover, this petition will help the elect to persevere even though

[Le Diable] ne cesse de leur [les esleuz] insidier... pour les destourner de la Parolle de Dieu, de la voye de vérité: à la sénestre, combien excite-il de persécutions, y a-il tourment qu'il n'excoigite? À la dextre, combien de sectes, d'hérésies, de scandalles? En quelque part que se tourne le fidèle, tandis qu'est en ce monde, hault, bas, à dextre, à sénestre, devant et derrière, dedans et dehors, que recongoist-il de l'oeil de foy que par tout son venin espandu et tel que, s'il n'y est pourveu, ameine la mort spirituelle et éternelle.

What are the faithful to do when faced with persecutions on the left and heresies on the right in a world bent on confessional strife? In his exposition of the commandment against bearing false witness, Roussel advised the faithful to dissimulate in need, advocating a comportment in face of persecution which Calvin stigmatized as (Pseudo-)Nicodemism. Citing as precedent a long list of biblical figures, including Abraham, the Egyptian midwives, Rahab, David, and Judith, but notably not Nicodemus, all of whom prevaricated or lied in times of need with God's blessing, Roussel argued that one can and should dissimulate the truth whenever speaking it would fail to edify one's neighbor and instead give "Sathan en ses organes et ministres" an opportunity to oppress the faithful and mislead those weak in the faith. Only with "l'oeil de foy ouvrante par charité" can

⁸¹ On Lefèvre's performative definition of true ministers, see *KS*, pp. 172–73, cf. 203.

⁸² For this and the next quotation, see *BnF*, fr. 419, fol. 141r.

one discern when exhibiting the truth “soit en doctrine, soit en dictz ou en faictz” will result in the glory of God and the good of others.⁸³

The advice of her almoner and that found in her catechism clarify for us that in their clearly evangelical but confessionally evasive doctrinal statements, their fervent but guarded piety, and bold but circumspect deeds, Marguerite and her network were agitating for a profound reformation of the universal Church from a particular vantage-point—persecution-ridden Catholic France—within a confessionally fractured Europe. Evangelicals from Lefèvre to Roussel took deep, though not exclusive, inspiration from the doctrinal works of a series of Protestant thinkers: Luther, Bucer, Brenz, Melancthon, and Calvin. Correspondingly, in the political sphere we see that Marguerite and other Evangelicals at court worked most closely, though by no means exclusively, with Protestants abroad in an attempt to convince François I to restore the French Church, in doctrine and practice, to conformity with their understanding of the gospel.

In this they failed. Yet, they were prepared for the worst. In his inscrutable wisdom, God might pass over France and allow their reform efforts to come to naught.⁸⁴ The only option in their view—as expressed in the poem that concludes Marguerite’s catechism like a benediction—was to soldier on as a small band, suffer persecution, and try to gather the elect, while awaiting final victory in the hereafter:

En aymant Dieu de cueur entierement,
 Consolons nous ensemble uniquement,
 Quelque tourment qu'on nous face ou grevance,
 Ne delaissons fraternelle alliance,
 Comme plusieurs font infidelement.

Les saints escriptz universellement,
 Mandent à tous d'avoir parfaitement,
 Dilection l'ung à l'autre et fiance,
 En aymant Dieu de cueur entierement.

Quant il viendra au jour du jugement,
 Il pugnira les tyrans durement,
 Et les esleux seront hors de souffrance.
 Vivons donc tous en certaine esperance,
 Prenans en gré le temps presentement,
 En aymant Dieu de cueur entierement. (Ars., 5096, fol. 57v)

⁸³ BnF, fr. 419, fol. 78r–v.

⁸⁴ See Gérard Roussel to Guillaume Farel, 24 August 1524, Herminjard, *Correspondance*, 1: 272–73, no 117.

MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE:
THE REASONS FOR REMAINING CATHOLIC

Jean-Marie Le Gall

Historians' well-known obsession with labeling religious tendencies in the course of a life lived in the early Renaissance, before there was a choice of Churches in France, provoked a memorably sarcastic response from Lucien Febvre. To the possible categories Catholic Marguerite, evangelical Marguerite, Protestant Marguerite, Lutheran Marguerite, Calvinist Marguerite, mystical Marguerite, spiritual Marguerite, skeptical or perhaps even free-thinking Marguerite, we might add Marguerite the Platonist, the Fabrist, or the Erasmian. "Toutes ces étiquettes dénuées d'intérêt pour l'homme qui sait la vie ou bien engendrent d'abominables anachronismes de pensée ou bien prétendent enfermer en deux mots toute la vie et toute l'œuvre, infiniment variées, d'une femme qui vécut cinquante ans."¹

It is not difficult to understand the famous historian's irritation at a frequently Protestant historiography that had allied François I's sister to its cause despite her disagreement with Calvin over the Spiritual Libertines. Théodore de Bèze was less categorical since he expressed regret that while Marguerite had initially supported the true gospel, she had relapsed into superstition and idolatry.² In the opinion of the Haag brothers in the 19th century, Marguerite was "ni catholique, ni protestante, dans le sens strict du mot . . . Mais elle cherchait la vérité, et c'est en cela qu'elle se rapprochait davantage du protestantisme."³ So innovative a female humanist could not be a Catholic since that religion was by definition identified with a conservative traditionalism, typical only—in the contemptuous (and contemptible) words of Febvre—of "femmes qui végètent obscurément dans la prison sordide d'une petite vie ménagère sans horizon ni courant d'air pur" (*Amour sacré*, p. 206). Such a view depends on a prejudice commonly held in France, even today, which associates Renaissance Protestantism with modernity and relegates Catholicism to the ignorance

¹ Lucien Febvre, *Amour sacré, amour profane: Autour de "l'Heptaméron"* (Paris, 1996 [1944]), p. 205.

² Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. G. Baum and E. Cunitz, 3 vols. (Paris, 1883–89), 1:36–37.

³ E. Haag and E. Haag, *La France protestante*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1846–59), 7:228.

of the Middle or Dark Ages.⁴ The battles between the Republic and the Catholic Church that began in 1791 in France weigh heavily on the interpretation of the national past.

The imposing of labels results not only from a confessional and political reading of the past, however. It also owes something to the positivist spirit of the late 19th century, committed to establishing categories and implicitly passing judgment. Abel Lefranc, who uncovered and published a number of Marguerite's works, believed these offered proof that the "mysticisme nébuleux, creux et platonicien" taught by Briçonnet formed only one stage in the development of a Reformed doctrine that was "déterminée, ferme sur les points essentiels." For Lefranc, the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*—published repeatedly and even translated by England's future Queen Elizabeth I during Marguerite's lifetime—was an "œuvre protestante," a "manifeste de la religion nouvelle" (*Les Idées*, pp. 8, 15). Lefranc's conclusion is terse yet still not without a certain ambiguity: "La sœur de François I^{er} a été sûrement protestante mais à sa manière" (p. 23). The historian goes so far as to state that he cannot imagine anyone wanting to "dissenter pour faire valoir l'opinion contraire." Marguerite did not belong to a Catholic third party like Rabelais or Sadoletto, named cardinal by the Erasmian Pope Paul III. She rejected monasticism, the cult of saints and of the Virgin, insisted on salvation by grace, and attached no value to purgatory or the sacraments.

It is in the light of such partisanship, stemming from an outlook no less positivist than confessionally motivated, that we can appreciate Lucien Febvre's irritation. Positivism reifies life rather than giving an account of it; confessionalism is anachronistic when applied to the fluid time of reforms during which Marguerite lived. Pierre Jourda's rich biography, a work that remains essential to an understanding of Marguerite, had served to inform Febvre about Marguerite's adherence to Catholicism.⁵ Nonetheless, reviewing Jourda's book in September 1931 for the Jesuit journal *Études*, Father Dudon felt that its author had not gone far enough in rehabilitating Marguerite's Catholicism.

And indeed, even though he refuses to apply labels, even though he insists that Marguerite was first and foremost a student of the Bible, even though he shows that she was above all a disciple of Saint Paul, in a sense

⁴ Abel Lefranc, *Les Idées religieuses de Marguerite de Navarre d'après son œuvre poétique* (Paris, 1898; Geneva, 1969), p. 33.

⁵ Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978).

which is not the monopoly of any Church, Febvre still chose to frame his discussion not in terms of Marguerite's Catholicism but of her possible Lutheranism, entitling his chapter "Marguerite luthérienne?" Lefranc had already claimed that she was more Lutheran than Calvinist, and the publication of W. G. Moore's *La Réforme allemande et la littérature française* offered support for this thesis.⁶ Febvre rejected this label, making Marguerite rather into a follower of Saint Paul, who remained within the Roman Church by default and because no other choice existed at the time. In other words, it was conformity that caused her to remain Catholic—and that was the end of a question summed up in an affirmation as peremptory as those of his opponents: "Marguerite a été Marguerite, c'est tout et c'est assez" (*Amour sacré*, p. 194). Such a judgment, that holds the course of a life to be fundamentally indescribable, is an invitation to historians to close up shop. Often right, often polemical, Febvre is an influential figure, who should nonetheless not be invoked as an infallible authority. Many of the questions he considered "mal posées" are in fact worthy of being looked at again.

To say, as does Febvre, that Marguerite lived at a time of "religions personnelles avant le temps des confessions," to say that she had a "religion à elle, qu'elle s'est faite elle même" (*Amour sacré*, p. 206) seems rather like seeing what one wants to see by taking her as the embodiment of an emergent religious autonomy distinct from the ambient conformity. Here Febvre was following the view of Jourda, who saw his subject as being "à côté de toute église," having forged "une doctrine personnelle" (*Marguerite*, 1:303). Before the age of confessionalism, then, one could apparently belong to the Church without believing. But is this not seeing the world through the spectacles of Calvin, who applied the term Nicodemite to those timid souls who, accepting neither exile nor martyrdom, preferred, in the name of material comfort, to continue to pollute themselves with heresy? Historians studying Marguerite have continued and will continue to write at length about the affinities of her work with a given Protestant text, to seek links and convergences, and, since there was as yet no Protestant Church, to examine the queen's Protestant networks, instead of putting positively rather than negatively the question of her continued adherence to Catholicism.

⁶ Will Grayburn Moore, *La Réforme allemande et la littérature française* (Strasbourg, 1930).

Lefranc, following Marius Cabantous or Henri Strolh, saw Marguerite's remaining Catholic as nothing more than a political obligation for the sister of the French king. In this view, Marguerite's heart was Reformed while she was politically Catholic, motivated by loyalty to her brother and by political interests involving her affairs in Navarre and the ability to grant ecclesiastical benefices to her clients. Henry Heller is willing to admit that she was Catholic, but at the same time seeks to show that her religion was an "unorthodoxy."⁷ The late Thierry Wanegffelen—whose personal journey led him to Catholic baptism as an adult before joining the Reformed Church—was the first to try to understand dispassionately the religious motivations that led men and women in the first half of the 16th century to remain within the fold of the traditional Church. Wanegffelen devotes no more than a few pages to Marguerite however, echoing Émile Léonard's argument concerning her fidelity to the mother Church and adding her commitment to ecclesiastical unity and her devotion to the Eucharist.⁸ As evidence of this last claim, we can note that, in July 1536, Marguerite participated in a procession from the church of the Celestines to that of the Dominicans in Lyon in order to expiate a sacrilege committed against a consecrated host (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:201). In December 1542, she repeated her opposition to the Sacramentarian arguments of the placards against the Mass.⁹ Finally, the Franciscan Gilles Caillau, whose preaching she had much appreciated, administered the last rites to her on her deathbed.¹⁰

To evoke the label "Catholic Marguerite," then, does not proceed from a confessional motivation but from a genuine historical question—which in fact presupposes a rejection of a strain of Catholic apologetics that claims the Roman Church's doctrine is invariable and that this is proof of its truth, in contrast with the variations existing in and between Protestant Churches. Clearly Marguerite was not a Catholic according to a post-Tridentine understanding—any more than she was according to an early 20th-century understanding associated with the Thomist revival in reaction to modernism. But Catholic she surely was in the way many of her most illustrious contemporaries were. This essay will detail the many

⁷ Henry Heller, "Marguerite of Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33 (1971), 271–310.

⁸ Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome, ni Genève: Des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1997), pp. 80–85.

⁹ François Génin, *Nouvelles lettres de la reine de Navarre* (Paris, 1842), p. 196.

¹⁰ Pierre Tucco-Chala, "Pau au temps de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992: Actes du Colloque international de Pau, 1992*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan, 1995), pp. 25–43 (p. 40).

indications of Marguerite's adherence to Catholicism and seek to understand their meaning.

Presumed Heretic?

One approach to Marguerite's religious sensibility—the most commonly practiced—is to analyze her works. This demands sensitivity to the differences in objective and status between, on the one hand, what she published during her lifetime—principally the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, the *Discord estant en l'homme par la contrariete de l'esperit et de la chair*, and the *Oraison à Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ* in 1531; the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* in 1533; *La Fable du faux cuyder* in 1543; and the major collection of texts contained in the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses* in 1547—or what was published posthumously but still in the 16th century—the *Heptaméron*, the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*—and, on the other hand, the texts uncovered by scholars since the end of the 19th century. The meaning and function of a text published by the queen are not the same as those of a text she kept private. It is also important to distinguish her own work from those presented or dedicated to her. The status of the latter is not the same with respect to the queen's involvement in the religious disputes of her day. To be given a translation of a Lutheran text did not mean one was a Lutheran. Censors, after all, were often the most familiar with the material they condemned.

Be that as it may, comparing Marguerite's work to Lutheran, Calvinist, or Platonizing intertexts is the preferred method of those who search the queen's soul in hope of finding a Lutheran or a Calvinist within. I do not seek to disparage this approach or to discourage scholars from seeking the queen's sources of inspiration. At a time when taking inspiration from the works of others was the general rule, borrowings, quotations, and the circulation of ideas are not clues to be despised. But how are they to be understood? Quoting Luther without naming him, as Marguerite does, does not have the same impact as invoking his name, perhaps even without quoting him. Furthermore, not every statement by (let's say again) Luther was necessarily heretical, which is all the more important if the reader was unaware of its source. Finally, attributing a proposition to one confessional camp or another can be a tricky business. It was possible to be a good Catholic and criticize monks, pilgrimages, or the superstitious excesses of the cult of saints, and even to believe in the weakness of humanity and in salvation by faith. For Wanegffelen, the true line of demarcation between Catholics and Protestants in Marguerite's time was

the Eucharist; this is where everything is said to have played out. The risk in this approach is that it charges the historian-theologian with defining identities, with all the attendant perils of retrospectively reconfiguring their contours and borders. To set up the Eucharist today as the central issue in the confessional divisions of the past seems to partake of an irenic religious strategy desirous, in order to establish a minimal shared creed, to make the list of things indifferent to salvation (*adiaphora*) as long as possible. The danger is to forget that for 16th-century Christians, monks, the cult of the Virgin, and holy images were not in the least indifferent to their religious choices. So even if intertextuality is a useful means of tracing the reception, circulation, or construction of texts, in the final analysis, describing a person or a work as more or less orthodox or heterodox depends on criteria established by the reader. The person who points out connections and rereads old texts to reveal their affinities is at risk of proceeding anachronistically. In consequence, the question seems to me not to be whether Marguerite's works look Catholic to us, but whether they were perceived as Catholic or not by her contemporaries.

Lefranc is clear. In his opinion, the censoring of the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* by the Faculty of Theology, the Sorbonne, gave the signal for the "attaques furieuses et grossières" of fanatical Catholics (*Les Idées*, p. 9). In fact, at no point was the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* ever censored by the Faculty of Theology. The book, confiscated by the lieutenant-criminel, would certainly have been presented to that body, since it had been printed without its authorization. But the Faculties of Arts and of Medicine distanced themselves immediately from the proceedings, which had aroused the ire of the king.¹¹ On 27 October, the theologians met and affirmed under oath that they had never condemned the work nor had it been condemned by their deputies. 54 doctors signed this affidavit, including the future inquisitor Matthieu Ory. On 3 November, the Dominican Guillaume Petit—royal confessor and bishop of Senlis, a friend of Marguerite but not sympathetic towards heterodoxy (he had denounced Michel d'Arande to the Faculty in 1522¹²)—presented the book to the Faculty, which repeated its declaration that it had not censored it, and each doctor was asked to ratify the decision with his signature. Five days later, the Faculty affirmed solemnly that neither it nor its deputies had either

¹¹ Francis Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne: A Bibliographical Study of Books in French Censured by the Faculty of Theology of Paris* (Geneva, 1979), p. 31; César Egasse Du Boulay, *Historia universitatis Parisiensis*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1665–73), 6:238.

¹² James K. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology, 1500–1536* (Toronto, 1980), p. 369.

reproved or approved the work, having never examined it. In all, more than 70 doctors declared that they had nothing to say concerning the work of the king's sister.¹³

This abortive attempt to condemn the *Miroir* has been explained by historians: Marguerite was indeed tainted with heresy but she was also the king's closest relative and the protection she enjoyed should not blind us to the Reformed tenor of her work. The price she paid for this political protection was never breaking openly with the religion of her brother. If we were to accept this political reading and follow it to its logical conclusion, this would mean that the indexes produced by faculties and institutions located in lands under the control of Charles V—François's bitterest enemy—could well have censored Marguerite's work in order to promote the idea that the king, who was already making alliances with infidels and negotiating with heretics, also had a sister of questionable orthodoxy. Rome could equally have entered the fray. Finally, the death of François I followed by that of Marguerite could have allowed the censors to speak out. As it is, not only the Parisian indexes of 1544, 1545, 1547, and 1549 make no mention of Marguerite's works, neither do those of 1551 and 1556, and the same is true of the indexes of Louvain and Antwerp and of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Roman Inquisitions.¹⁴ During the whole of the 16th century, no Catholic censor in France or anywhere else in Europe ever expressed publicly the slightest doubt about the orthodoxy of Marguerite's work. Her mysticism was not assimilated to that of the *alumbrados*, who were condemned in Spain; her thought was not conflated with Lutheran or Calvinist doctrine. Soledad Arredondo did discover that, in 1573, the Spanish Inquisition seized a "discurso de la reina de Navarra."¹⁵ But this might refer either to Marguerite or to her daughter Jeanne d'Albret. In 1583, Heredia's report for the tribunal reveals that the Inquisition examined a copy of the 1547 *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses* but that, in the end, it did not place the work on the index of Quiroga. Arredondo has also argued that the *Chansons spirituelles* were put on the index in Spain in 1583 and a publication with the same title had earlier been condemned by the Paris index of 1544 and the Antwerp index of 1570. Yet nothing proves these poems were those of

¹³ James K. Farge, *Registre des conclusions de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris* (Paris, 1990–), vol. 2 (1994), pp. 302, 303, 305.

¹⁴ J. M. de Bujanda et al., *Index des livres interdits*, 11 vols. (Sherbrooke and Geneva, 1984–2002).

¹⁵ Soledad Arredondo, "La Réception de l'*Heptaméron* en Espagne: Raisons d'une absence," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, pp. 189–204 (p. 195).

Marguerite; Jésus Martinez de Bujanda identifies the censored title as a work by Matthieu Malingre, published in Paris in 1533.

In the eyes of 16th-century censors, then, Marguerite was orthodox, even if present-day historians raise questions concerning her beliefs and her Protestant friends. From this point of view, Marguerite's historiographical fortunes have been the exact opposite of those of Erasmus. For the last 50 years or so, since the Second Vatican Council, the work of the Dutch humanist has undergone a rehabilitation in terms of its Catholicism, so much so that a historian like Silvana Seidel Menchi has felt the need to remind us that Erasmus was considered a heretic by many of his contemporaries in Italy and Spain. His works were placed on indexes, his readers arrested and interrogated by the Inquisition.¹⁶ This does not seem to have been the case for Marguerite's readers, although further research remains to be done. In short, Marguerite does not seem to have worried Church authorities, with the exception of Érard de Grossolles, bishop of Condom. On the contrary, a number of prelates, like Paul Sadolet, bishop of Carpentras, or Pier Vergerio, sang her praises. And in addition to Guillaume Briçonnet, Georges d'Armagnac, Gérard Roussel, and the Cardinal de Tournon, whose sister was in the queen's household, she also expressed her affection for Artus Fillon¹⁷ and Pierre Du Chastel.¹⁸ Pope Paul III, who met with her in the company of Cardinals Jacopo Sadoletto and Contarini in Nice in 1538, discussed theology with her at length. The Pope's wine-steward Lancerio commented after this meeting that it is unusual to see "such a learned (*dotta*) and holy woman."¹⁹ Let us look more closely then at Marguerite's relationship with the Catholic hierarchy.

Remaining Faithful to Rome

"[E]lle vouloit croire en ce que son Dieu et son Eglise commandoient, sans entrer plus avant en autre curiosité," Brantôme affirmed of Marguerite.²⁰ Her attachment to the Church, for which we will detail the evidence here,

¹⁶ Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus hérétique: Réforme et inquisition dans l'Italie du XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1996).

¹⁷ François Génin, *Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême* (Paris, 1841), pp. 158 and 375. Fillon was bishop of Senlis 1522–26.

¹⁸ Bishop of Tulle, 1539; Mâcon, 1544; Orléans, 1551.

¹⁹ Laurent Ripart, "Marguerite à Nice (juin 1538)," in *Études sur "L'Heptaméron" de Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Christine Martineau-Génieys (Nice, 1996), pp. 123–39 (p. 136).

²⁰ Pierre de Brantôme, *Recueil des dames*, ed. Étienne Vaucheret (Paris, 1991), p. 183.

rested on the role of apostolic continuity as a guarantor of doctrine. Thus, Febvre is overly precipitous in stating that she did not have a “sens de la hiérarchie catholique” (*Amour sacré*, p. 201). According to the historian, Marguerite’s mystical and feminine sensibilities were at odds with hierarchical communication. This overlooks the fact, however, that the works of Pseudo-Dionysius—greatly admired at the time as the Apostle of the Gauls—were at one and the same time the foundation of a mystical theology and of a hierocracy. Luther’s accusations against the Pseudo-Dionysian writings, that he considered more Platonizing than Christian, were rejected by the Faculty of Theology of Paris; they were also rejected by Guillaume Briçonnet, who discussed Dionysius’s thought with Marguerite at such length that she asked the bishop to devote a letter to him in 1524.²¹ According to a Dionysian vision, the transmission of the light of divine grace is effected by means of a hierarchical mediation, through which come the sacraments. Paul Sadolet, who in 1548 praised the Catholicism of the queen of Navarre and her zeal for the reform of the Church, stressed that she spoke of the latter with moderation, “en réservant toujours l’autorité de qui cela relève.”²² This ecclesiology was all the more likely to appeal to Marguerite in that it established a theologico-political order suited to her situation—that of a sister of a king who was not a “daughter of France” since her own father had never ruled. In a letter from December 1521, Briçonnet recalled that the monarch is God’s viceroy and lieutenant on earth, adding that God “luy a données les grâces insignes et grandes pour les faire ardre en son administration et royaume” (*Correspondance*, 1:113). This Dionysian view of the world seems to be confirmed by Brantôme, according to whom, when Montmorency cast doubt on Marguerite’s religion, the sovereign replied: “Elle ne croyra jamais que ce que je croyray, et ne prendra jamais de religion qui prejudicie à mon Estat” (*Recueil*, p. 178). It would be reductive to read such an affirmation only in terms of family ties or a sister’s love of her brother. The queen of Navarre cared about the unity of the kingdom as she cared about the unity of the Church—which depended on the king and the pope. How, then, could she have joined the schismatic heretics who saw Rome as

²¹ Letter 103: Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d’Angoulême, *Correspondance* (1521–1524), ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79), 2:162. On Dionysius in France and Europe in the 16th century, see Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Le Mythe de saint Denis: entre Renaissance et Révolution* (Seyssel, 2007).

²² Marc Venard, *Réforme protestante, réforme catholique dans la province d’Avignon au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1993), p. 416.

the new Babylon and the pope as the Antichrist, and whom François I increasingly viewed as fomenters of sedition? Marguerite was certainly a papist, attached to hierarchies. Toward the end of her life, she confided in Paul III that she had always loved, respected, and obeyed the pope, especially since the meeting in Nice when he had received her with such marks of distinction (“dopo che io ne recevei tanti honori a Niza”).²³

There is no doubt that Marguerite needed the pope and recognized his power with respect to canonical dispensations and investitures of ecclesiastical offices. But neither did she deny the power of the keys of the successor of Saint Peter since, in November 1524, she took part in Lyon in the jubilee declared by Clement VII on his accession to the papal throne (Génin, *Lettres*, p. 172). In November 1533, while the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* was the subject of debate and Advent was approaching, Clement VII accorded her a dispensation for medical reasons (she believed she was pregnant) from the obligation to abstain from meat, eggs, butter, and dairy products. The dispensation was also intended to calm the queen's scruples of conscience.²⁴ In 1545, she wrote to Cardinal Farnese asking him to annul the marriage of her daughter to the duke of Cleves.²⁵ Marguerite did not seek in any way to free herself from the pope's spiritual power over Christendom and in relation to its temporal princes, nor, according to the nuncio, did she approve of the schismatic course taken by the king of England.²⁶

Marguerite also intervened frequently to obtain ecclesiastical benefices for her clients—from the king (as a result of the Concordat) but also from the pope. In 1536, the nuncio was strongly solicited to secure the bishopric of Oloron for Gérard Roussel.²⁷ From 1540 on, she was extremely active in ensuring that Georges d'Armagnac, whom she called her son, should receive a cardinal's hat.²⁸ In 1542, she denied that he was illegitimate and the nuncio expressed his fear that if her request was denied, she

²³ Charles Samaran and Henry Patry, “Marguerite de Navarre et le pape Paul III: lettres inédites,” *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 68 (1907), 320–38 (p. 338).

²⁴ Bartolommeo Fontana, *Renata di Francia, duchessa di Ferrara, sui documenti dell'archivio Estense, del Mediceo, del Gonzaga e dell'archivio segreto Vaticano*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1889–99), 1:489.

²⁵ Samaran and Patry, “Marguerite,” p. 334.

²⁶ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, ed. Jean Lestocquoy, Acta nuntiaturae gallicae (Rome-Paris, 1961), p. 535.

²⁷ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, pp. 99 and 220.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 619.

might turn against the pope.²⁹ There was no real danger of this: in 1544 d'Armagnac was still not a cardinal and Marguerite continued to plead his cause. As she declared in December 1544, in a letter to Cardinal Farnese, Georges d'Armagnac was worthy of a cardinal's hat not only because of his personal merits, but also in consideration of "l'honneur que par ce moien le roy de Navarre et moy en pouvons recevoir." Having always been "loyale et fidèle au pape," it would be strange and a source of shame "que nostre seulle maison demour[ât] en tout ce reaulme sans sentir le tesmoignaige d'estre en sa bonne grâce."³⁰ In the European political order, the pope was a dispenser of high offices and honors which conferred rank and distinguished families. To break with Rome was to break with the socio-political hierarchy guaranteed by the Church. Marguerite was socially and politically conservative; she also had strong ambitions for her husband, his reduced domains, and their less-than-secure lineage.

If Marguerite needed the pope however, he also needed her. Some would again stress here the worldly aspects of this exchange, for example regarding the help she afforded the Farnese family. Thus, in 1540, she gave her support to the marriage of Vittoria Farnese with Monsieur d'Aumale, who was a Guise.³¹ The following year, she undertook to welcome to the French court the young Horace Farnese, the natural son of Pier Luigi, duke of Parma.³² And in 1542, she intervened to promote his marriage to a princess of the house of Este from Ferrara.³³ At the same time, it would be an oversimplification to reduce papal policy involving Marguerite to these family strategies.

As the sister of a king, to whom she was also an influential advisor, the pope was careful to show Marguerite all due regard. As early as 1522, Adrian VI asked her to use her influence with François I to promote peace.³⁴ In October 1524, Clement VII wrote asking her to encourage the king to receive the papal datary Ghiberti, who hoped to appease the dispute which was to lead to Pavia (Jourda, *Répertoire*, p. 44). After the death of Louise de Savoie, between 1531 and 1549, no fewer than 14 papal briefs

²⁹ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, ed. Jean Lestocquoy, Acta nuntiaturae gallicae (Rome-Paris, 1963), pp. 109 and 140.

³⁰ Samaran and Patry, "Marguerite," p. 333.

³¹ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, p. 595.

³² Samaran and Patry, "Marguerite," p. 327.

³³ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, pp. 114 and 128.

³⁴ Pierre Jourda, *Répertoire analytique et chronologique de la correspondance de Marguerite d'Angoulême* (Paris, 1930), p. 17.

recommended to the queen's good graces various envoys sent to France: a nuncio, a legate, or even a chamberlain.³⁵ All these documents soliciting Marguerite's personal intervention offer so many testimonials to her faith, prudence, and fidelity to the Holy See. Nuncios furthermore sometimes advised the pope to write to her given the importance of her role in the royal council, as in December 1535 when Rome sought to avoid a return to war. Following a conversation with her at that time, the nuncio reported: "she always speaks with me in the best way one could possibly wish for."³⁶

The pope, in his role as father of all Christian princes, tried to use Marguerite's diplomatic influence to maintain peace between Europe's two most powerful Catholic sovereigns at the same time that confessional divisions and growing Ottoman power were weakening the Holy See. As a humanist, Marguerite was receptive to a project aimed at preserving and renewing Christendom since, on 17 March 1536, the nuncio reported that she spoke favorably concerning the pope's mediation between François I and Charles V in the hope of avoiding war.³⁷ The following year, the nuncio stated that Marguerite was making great efforts to promote peace.³⁸ Equally, during his mission in 1542 to prevent conflict from reigniting, Jacopo Sadoletto expressed regret at the queen's absence from court since this deprived him of a precious ally.³⁹ A year later, the nuncio judged her the strongest supporter of Rome vis-à-vis the king ("il meglio appoggio").⁴⁰ In February 1544, in a letter to Cardinal Farnese, the Cardinal Nephew, she encouraged him, as a "mère à son fils," to persevere in his efforts to find common ground between Charles V and François I.⁴¹ In April or May 1547, she wrote to Paul III that she hoped he would strengthen the friendship between Charles V and the new king of France in order to "reformer et conserver la chrétienté."⁴²

The issue of peace was in fact closely connected to an important ecclesiastical question: the meeting of the Council that Paul III had convoked

³⁵ Fontana, *Renata di Francia*, 1:492, 479; 2:482, 486; 3:366, 372, 373, 375, 377, 378, 380, 381–84.

³⁶ "[C]erto sempre con meco parla di sorte che meglio non si sapia desiderare," *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, p. 99.

³⁷ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, p. 148.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 254, 305.

³⁹ Richard M. Douglas, *Jacopo Sadoletto 1477–1547, Humanist and Reformer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 171.

⁴⁰ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, p. 294.

⁴¹ Samaran and Patry, "Marguerite," p. 332.

⁴² Samaran and Patry, "Marguerite," p. 336.

in 1535. As early as the following year, the pope asked for Marguerite's support.⁴³ In 1540, in a conversation with the nuncio, the queen declared herself in favor of such a Council.⁴⁴ The pope and the king of France were both concerned at this time by Charles V's attempts to settle religious differences in the Empire by means of colloquies. Clearly agreements reached in this way were politically detrimental to François I, whose interests were served by divisions within the Empire, but settlements reached under the aegis of imperial power also undermined the authority of the pope and Church councils. The bishop Pier Paulo Vergerio, sent by the pope to Worms, made his way there via France, where the king engaged him as his own agent. But the bishop was also affected by Marguerite's spiritual and intellectual influence. In a letter he wrote to her, he revealed his pessimism concerning these regional colloquies marked by divisive theological quibbling, but he recognized at the same time that their failure would well serve the interests of the pope and the king of France.⁴⁵ In 1541, Marguerite told the nuncio Dandino that this policy of colloquies showed that the emperor, like the king of England, sought to "make himself pope in his own domains."⁴⁶ When the Council of Trent finally opened in 1545, François I sent a small delegation of prelates, including several bishops close to his sister, such as Nicolas Dangu, bishop of Séz, Guillaume Pellicier, Pierre Du Chastel, Gérard Roussel, and Jean Joly de Choin. One of the royal ambassadors envisaged by François I, Jacques de Mesme, was especially close to Marguerite.⁴⁷

The queen of Navarre's support for a Council arose from her Gallican vision of Christendom, whereas the king of France was somewhat more hesitant, given the risk that it might offer a platform to that part of the French Church opposed to the Concordat. Marguerite's intent was at once to assure the respect due to the Holy See, against the emperor, but also to limit pontifical interference in the exercise of temporal power and to promote the unity of Christendom. While respectful of the sovereign pontiff, she nonetheless resisted any papal pretense to indirect control over

⁴³ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, p. 208.

⁴⁴ "Si bene Lauda che si faria un concilio," *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, p. 550.

⁴⁵ Ann Jacobson Schutte, *Pier Paolo Vergerio: The Making of an Italian Reformer* (Geneva, 1977), pp. 144 and 149.

⁴⁶ "[E]gli non pensava meno a farsi papa nelli suoi domini ch'avesse mai fatto il Re d'Inghilterra," *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Alain Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente* (Rome, 1997), pp. 168, 166, 644.

temporal powers. In keeping with this view, in March 1540, she made known to the nuncio her opposition to any idea of depriving the king of England of his throne by means of a papal deposition supported by military action from François I and Charles V. She even reminded him pointedly that the papacy had behaved in just this way when it had deprived the kings of Navarre of their title following the Spanish conquest of the southern part of their territory in 1512.⁴⁸ The king of England would be more likely to return to the fold of the Catholic Church if the emperor and the king of France established a commercial blockade. Moreover, in the light of imperial propaganda denouncing France's alliance with the Turks and the passivity of the Most Christian King in combating heresy, Marguerite repeated the position elaborated by the French monarchy justifying these policies. In January 1536, in the wake of the *affaire des placards*, she told the nuncio Carpi that François I had served Christianity well, having punished the Lutherans more severely than the emperor, who "fait le saint et le catholique" but did less against the heretics in his domains.⁴⁹ As for the sultan, he respected the king of France because he considered him to be, like himself, a descendent of Hector of Troy.⁵⁰ Two years later, the *Soliloque François*, a defense of the Turkish alliance destined to remain in manuscript, was dedicated to Marguerite by its author, Jean Lucas de La Fons. According to this text, those who spoke out against royal policies violated the king's secret counsel and sought to "usurper l'office de chief, contre tout ordre hiérarchique." Moreover, in seeking to discredit the Most Christian King, Charles V was weakening Christendom and the pope, while François had always defended "la foy catholique et pureté de l'église chrétienne et militante." The emperor besides had done nothing to help the island of Rhodes in 1522; he also had infidel allies, like the king of Tunis, and in Worms and Regensburg (Ratisbon) had negotiated with heretics. Finally, the Bible did not forbid Israel from making alliances with the gentiles.⁵¹

Marguerite's attachment to the Roman Church reflects her theologico-political beliefs that bring together, in one mystical body, social order, ecclesiastical hierarchy, the unity of Christendom, respect for the

⁴⁸ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, p. 550.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵⁰ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Capodiferro, Dandino et Guidiccione*, p. 24.

⁵¹ V. L. Saulnier, "Le Soliloque français, œuvre inédite de Jean Lucas de La Fons: Une apologie de l'alliance turque inspirée par Marguerite de Navarre," in *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire de la Renaissance offerts à Henri Chamard* (Paris, 1951), pp. 210–24.

sovereign pontiff, and a commitment to Gallicanism and the reform of the Church.

Remaining Faithful to Royal Monastic Reform

Pierre Jourda stressed the importance Marguerite attached to a “réforme de l’Église dans l’Église” (*Marguerite*, 1:303). The period saw many reformist experiments of different kinds, at times little appreciated by certain parts of the Catholic establishment, such as, for example, the experiments of Lefèvre d’Étaples at Meaux, deemed heterodox by the Paris Faculty of Theology. Marguerite was without question sympathetic to such initiatives in France as well as in Italy.⁵² It is understandable, then, that history, the student of change, should have focused on this interest in new ways of reform. Nevertheless, Marguerite did not repugn more traditional forms of action like monastic reform, which, contrary to the belief of Jourda, was far from representing “les premiers et timides essais d’une réforme catholique” (*Marguerite*, 1:48). Augustin Renaudet and I have both emphasized the movement’s vitality, especially before 1520.⁵³ Marguerite came in contact with it very early, as she acknowledges in *nouvelle* 22 of the *Heptaméron*. Here we meet a sinister character, the prior of Saint-Martin-des-Champs, whose name the author withholds due to their former friendship. In fact, Étienne Gentil was one of the major reformers of male and female monastic houses in the Paris region between 1510 and 1535; he was also the Visitor of Fontevault and part of an attempt to reform Lérins.⁵⁴ We do not know when Marguerite became acquainted with Gentil, but the break between them came perhaps in 1521 for juridical rather than religious reasons. In 1513, Marguerite also heard Bonifazio da Ceva preach at Blois. He was the Franciscan Minister General who tried to reform his order in unity under the established hierarchy (*sub ministris*), following the model of Saint Colette, rather than through division, as was the practice of the Observant Franciscans (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:38). Marguerite’s

⁵² Richard Cooper, “Marguerite de Navarre et la réforme italienne,” in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, pp. 159–88 (pp. 160–76).

⁵³ Augustin Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d’Italie (1494–1517)*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1953 [1916]); Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Les Moines au temps des Réformes, France (1480–1560)* (Seyssel, 2001).

⁵⁴ On Étienne Gentil, see Le Gall, *Les Moines*, esp. pp. 517–18, 546, 548–49. See also Jean-Marie Le Gall, “Le temps des réformes bénédictines, XV^e–XVIII^e siècle,” in *Histoire de l’abbaye de Lérins*, ed. Mireille Labrousse, Eliana Magnani, Yann Codou, et al. (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 2005), pp. 321–448 (p. 370).

entourage also included reformers of major abbeys like Guillaume Briçonnet, Commendatory Abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Artus Fillon, who, as bishop of Senlis, reformed the abbeys of Saint-Maurice and La Victoire in that city.⁵⁵

Despite the view of Lucien Febvre (*Amour sacré*, p. 20), an inventory of Marguerite's interventions in this area seems to be called for:

- 1515, a letter to the Parlement of Paris in favor of the reformed Dominicans of Le Mans against the non-reformed.⁵⁶
- 1516, a letter to the Parlement of Paris in favor of the reform of Yerre.⁵⁷
- 1518, a letter to Leo X in favor of Almenèches.
- 1521, a letter to the king in favor of the reform of Saint-Andoche and Saint-Jean d'Autun.⁵⁸
- 1524, the reform of the abbey of Issoudun.⁵⁹
- 1526, Luigi Canossa asks her to intervene at La Trinité in Caen.
- 1531, a letter to Rome asking the pope to support the reform of the Franciscans of Amiens and in which she regrets "la désobéissance des religieux à l'égard de leurs supérieurs."⁶⁰
- 1532, Gregorio Cortese requests that Marguerite dissuade the king from ending the incorporation of Lérins in the Italian reformed Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua.⁶¹
- 1540, she requests the reform of the Dominicans at Tarbes and the Poor Clares at Mont-de-Marsan.⁶²

As this chronology makes clear, Marguerite's involvement in monastic reform slowed somewhat after 1530, a development in line with the general tendency following the intense activity of the years from 1480 to 1520. Other reforms made their appearance and the regular orders were increasingly discredited by numerous internal disputes. It is nonetheless apparent that Marguerite was an important force in this movement and replied positively to those who sought her help.

⁵⁵ *Gallia christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distributa*, ed. Denis de Sainte-Marthe et al., 16 vols. (Farnborough, 1970 [1715–1865]), 10:1440.

⁵⁶ Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, 2009), 2:577.

⁵⁷ Jourda, *Répertoire*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Jourda, *Répertoire*, p. 9; *Gallia christiana*, 4:481.

⁵⁹ Gaspard Thaumas de La Thaumassière, *Histoire de Berry*, 2 vols. (Bourges, 1865 [1689]), 1:111.

⁶⁰ Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:123.

⁶¹ *Histoire de Lérins*, p. 374. V. L. Saulnier, "Troubles au couvent de Tarascon: Marguerite de Navarre, Guillaume du Maine, Claude de Bectoz et Denys Faucher," *French Renaissance Studies in Honor of Isidore Silver, Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 21 suppl. 2 (1974), 309–17.

⁶² Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:312.

The importance Marguerite attached to monastic and conventual reform was based in part on a familial and patrimonial heritage. Marguerite's domains—which even recent historiography, adopting an expression of Martin Bucer, describes as “*petites Germanies*”—had been affected before her time by monastic reform. As a result of her marriage to the duke of Alençon, Marguerite became the daughter-in-law of Marguerite de Lorraine, a person much involved in monastic reform in Normandy. Marguerite de Lorraine received the habit of the Third Order of the Franciscans in 1516 from the hands of Gabriel Maria, before whom she took vows four years later.⁶³ Marguerite de Lorraine was not only a princess devoted to works of charity, she also wrote a series of *Pensées pieuses* in the form of a dialogue between Christ and the Virgin Mary.⁶⁴ Obsessed by the question of salvation, the duchess become nun repeats the leitmotif “n’espère pas mais aussi ne désespère.” The world is vanity but in Christ there is hope. The Virgin, the first to believe in the resurrection of her son, is the image of this confidence. Filled with sorrow, the Virgin is also the image of love for Christ, whom, the text tells us, Marguerite de Lorraine had the good fortune to see face to face (BnF, n.a. fr. 1857, fol. 34). This spirituality focused on Christ and the Virgin as the model of devotion was well suited to a hierarchical vision of the world inspired by Pseudo-Dionysius. Indeed, the aristocratic nun drew a clear parallel between the angelic and earthly hierarchies: lords are equivalent to Dominions; priests to Principalities, married men to Archangels, and monks to Thrones (ibid., fol. 54).

The queen of Navarre took on part of this spiritual and reforming heritage. She supported the reformed Dominicans in Caen in 1515, as Marguerite de Lorraine had done seven years earlier in Argentan. At the latter's death, Marguerite de Navarre continued to pay a pension of 40 livres tournois (l.t.) to Marie Gaveran, a nun at Mortagne.⁶⁵ In September 1543, she created two pensions of 20 l.t. for two other nuns in the same house, to which she made a gift of wood in 1548.⁶⁶ When the Confraternity of the Présentation de Notre-Dame of Alençon was subjected to fines in

⁶³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1047, fols. 49 and 54v.

⁶⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, n.a. fr. 1857, Marguerite de Lorraine, *Pensées pieuses*.

⁶⁵ Abel Lefranc and Jacques Boulenger, *Comptes de Louise de Savoie et de Marguerite d'Angoulême* (Paris, 1905), pp. 79 and 95.

⁶⁶ Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, MS 1831, Jean de Frotté, *Registre de la maison de Marguerite de Navarre. Livres de dépenses. Deuxième registre des finances, 1548–1549*, fols. 14 and 60.

1546, Marguerite decided to remit half the sum and directed that the other half be used to renovate the chapel of the confraternity, founded by her mother-in-law in the church of Notre-Dame (Bib. Inst., 1831, fol. 49). Piety, for Marguerite, included fidelity to the religion of her ancestors and to a mother-in-law soon wreathed in an aura of sanctity.

In 1517, Marguerite's brother granted her the duchy of Berry. This had been a particularly important locus of monastic renewal, with the Benedictine reform of Chezal-Benoît and the foundation by Jeanne de France of the Order of the Annonciades, which this daughter, sister, and repudiated wife of kings of France subsequently entered herself. Marguerite continued this activity in Berry, which must have been familiar to her through Gabriel Maria, an Observant Franciscan who had been close to both Marguerite de Lorraine and Jeanne de France. In December 1523, in response to his sister's urging, François I confirmed the pension of 340 l.t. that Jeanne de France had granted her beloved Annonciades. A little earlier, Marguerite herself had given them tithes, both because of their material need and in recognition of the prayers they offered on her behalf as duchess.⁶⁷ In September 1542, she remitted the taxes they owed her for 80 acres of newly acquired land.⁶⁸

If Marguerite's involvement in monastic reform lessened from around 1530, she continued to find monastic life attractive, and not only because of her filial piety and her obligations as duchess of Alençon and Berry. She was also drawn to it as a matter of personal choice, frequenting religious houses throughout her life. In 1522, she visited Saint-Victor in Paris;⁶⁹ she stayed with the Celestines in Lyon in 1525 and, in October of that year, spent much time in the monasteries of Toledo (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:124). In 1531, for "la consolation spirituelle de son âme," Pope Clement VII granted her the right, with 12 noblewomen of her choice, to enter the enclosure of any convent of Poor Clares, to speak and eat with the sisters, and even, accompanied by four ladies, to spend the night (Fontana, *Renata di Francia*, 3:370). We know that Marguerite paid frequent visits to the Poor Clares in Nérac. In 1547, as François I lay dying and following his death, she spent several months in the Fontevrist priory of Tusson.

⁶⁷ Ferdinand Delorme, "Documents pour l'histoire du Bienheureux Gabriel Maria," *La France Franciscaine* 10 (1929), 212–16.

⁶⁸ Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, MS 1830, Jean de Frotté, *Registre de la maison de Marguerite de Navarre. Livres de dépenses. Premier registre des finances, 1540–1548*, fol. 96.

⁶⁹ Pierre Driart, "Chronique parisienne," *Mémoires de la société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Ile de France* 22 (1895), 67–178 (p. 74).

"Souvant on l'a veu . . . chanter avec' les Religieuses en leur Messes et leur vespres," Brantôme tells us (*Recueil*, p. 182). In this light, it is not surprising that she chose as the setting for the company of noble storytellers in the *Heptaméron* the abbey of Saint-Savin, where they were "humainement receuz," and Serrance.⁷⁰

Aside from the Poor Clares, the Second Order of Saint Francis, Marguerite had a particular affection for the Order of Fontevrault, a mixed congregation under the rule of an abbess. She went there in 1516 and in the winter of 1545, and dedicated a poem to the abbess (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:50). In the interval, she supported the continued reform of the order. With the help of the legate, Philippe de Luxembourg, of Jean de Bans, the abbot of Saint-Martin-de-Séez, and of Artus Fillon, Almenèches was reformed by the transfer of 15 nuns from the Fontevrist priory of Belhomer, which had itself been reformed in 1498. Marguerite was instrumental in having the buildings restored and Marie de La Jaille installed as abbess in place of Jacqueline Heudé, who had nonetheless been elected (*Gallia christiana*, 11:737–38). Luigi Canossa, bishop of Bayeux, wrote to Marguerite in 1526 on behalf of the nuns of La Trinité in Caen, whose reform was undertaken by the abbess Renée de Bourbon, who was also abbess of Fontevrault (*Gallia christiana*, 11:435–36). There were, moreover, family ties to that order as is seen in the fact that the Fontevrist priory of Haute-Bruyère was chosen for the interment of the heart and entrails of François I.⁷¹ Who can say whether Marguerite, who often presented herself as a "mère spirituelle," did not have a particular interest in the power exercised by women in their capacity as abbess, and if her attachment to Catholicism was not also due in part to the degree of freedom that monastic structures offered women?⁷² Brantôme reports that at Tusson, Marguerite would frequently "faire l'office de l'abesse" (*Recueil*, p. 182). A certain element of feminism may thus explain her attachment to monasticism and therefore to Catholicism.

Marguerite was also a lifelong distributor of alms to monks and nuns: 17 livres to the Poor Clares of Argentan in December 1540 and again in February 1541, when she gave the same sum to the nuns of Essay (Bib.

⁷⁰ Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani (Paris, 1999), pp. 81ff.

⁷¹ Jean Jacquart, *François I^{er}* (Paris, 1980), p. 393.

⁷² On the "mère spirituelle," see Viviane Mellinghoff-Bourgerie, "L'Échange épistolaire entre Marguerite d'Angoulême et Guillaume Briçonnet: discours mystiques ou direction spirituelle?," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, pp. 135–57 (pp. 140–42).

Inst., 1830, fols. 10, 15, 18). At Easter 1543, after Communion, her secretary recorded that she gave 52 écus to 13 convents (ibid., fol. 123). In May 1543, she forgave a penalty of 106 l.t. owed to her by the nuns of Almenèches (Bib. Inst., 1831, fol. 7). In 1545, she paid 50 l.t. that various debtors owed to the Dominicans of Bourges, which is an indication both of her concern for those in debt and of her desire to protect the convent (ibid., fol. 30). All these gifts were not merely a demonstration of her well-known generosity; they show that she did not reject the intercessory role of men and women living a cloistered life consecrated to God. In this spirit, she made a gift to the Franciscans of Alençon in 1526 in order to be included in their prayers (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:142). In June 1541, she distributed 35 l.t. to mendicant friaries in Tours, asking for prayers for her sick daughter (Bib. Inst., 1830, fol. 32). At the end of 1542, believing herself to be pregnant, she had 50 l.t. given to the nuns of Nérac (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:277–78). In 1545, in addition to the money given to the mendicants of Bourges, the abbey of Essay received a donation of wood (ibid., 1:304). This continued recourse to the intercession of religious orders offers eloquent testimony to her attachment both to the communion of saints and to the institutional Church.

All this leads us to the question of her understanding of reform and of monastic life. Marguerite had no great respect for the principle of election, and a good number of abbeys reformed with her help saw their elected superior deposed. In 1530, she wrote to Montmorency to notify him that the abbey of Issoudun, whose income was between 6000–7000 l.t., would soon likely need a new abbot and she recommended Christophe Garrault as someone who would lead it to “mieux vivre en bon état régulier.” Concerning procedure, she continued: “Ne scay encores si les moynes ont privilège d’eslire toutefois quant je scauray par votre réponse le bon playsir du roy je y ferai donner tel ordre que y sera requis afin que ledict personnage puisse être pourveu selon mon désir pour le bien de l’abbaye” (Génin, *Lettres*, p. 262). Acting in this way, Marguerite expressed her authority as duchess. In the end, however, it was not her candidate who was appointed and who would oversee the reform of Issoudun but Jacques Colin, abbot of Saint-Ambroise in Bourges. Neither was Marguerite particularly concerned with the canonical principle that reserved regular benefices to the regular clergy. In 1535, she intervened to ensure that Georges d’Armagnac receive Saint-Martin-de-Sées and Jean Du Bellay Saint-Vincent-du-Mans, two abbeys reformed by Chezal-Benoît and in principle requiring the election of an abbot from within the order (Jourda, *Répertoire*, p. 134). Neither religious habit nor procedure mattered much

to Marguerite as long as she believed a candidate possessed the required qualities. In 1538, she visited in person the abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris in order to accelerate the profession of Antonio Caracciolo, one of her protégés, a young man attracted to the eremitic life of the Carthusians or of la Sainte-Baume, and whom she wanted to see succeed the elected abbot Jean Bordier. Bordier was uncooperative, however, and in 1542, having tried in vain to resign in favor of a monk, he resolved to cede his abbey to the Cardinal de Bourbon. At that point, Marguerite intervened to obtain the Cardinal's withdrawal in favor of Caracciolo, who finally became abbot of Saint-Victor in 1543.⁷³ It is true that the new superior was a regular but his nomination was as a commendatory abbot who claimed the full power of collation and income from the office. In no time at all, Caracciolo found himself in conflict with his monks, who accused him of violating the abbey's constitutions and appealed the abuses to the Parlement. At this point, Marguerite intervened again in order to have the matter referred to the king's private council.⁷⁴ Believing himself a worthy pastor, Caracciolo considered the monks' contestation itself an indication of a disordered life and wrote the *Mirouer de vraye religion*, in which he enjoined them to holy obedience: "Vous devez rendre grâce à Dieu qui vous a pourvu d'un père qui vous aime et désire votre salut. Vous devez vous employer à luy faire chose agréable et lui porter en toute chose, honneur et obéissance et sans trop curieusement vous enquérir pourquoi il commande une chose ou une autre, estimer tous ses commandements être raisonnables."⁷⁵ Caracciolo subscribed to a view of reform as coming from above, *per capite*. To obey one's superior was to obey God. We see, then, that Marguerite remained faithful to the principle of royal reform, in which election was not the primary means of reestablishing regularity of life but rather a cause of disorder. The guarantee of the good state of the Church of France was the appointment of worthy people at the head of communities. Such a view is in line with the logic of the Concordat, even if in reality this was implemented quite differently. Marguerite espoused the ideas of royal Gallicanism rather than those of capitular Gallicanism.

Caracciolo's text, written for the canons regular of Saint-Victor, allows us to discern Marguerite's ideal of the monastic life, knowing that she

⁷³ Fourier Bonnard, *Histoire de l'Abbaye royale et de l'Ordre des chanoines réguliers de St-Victor de Paris*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1904–08), 2:36.

⁷⁴ Joseph Roserot de Melin, *Antonio Caracciolo, évêque de Troyes (1515?–1570)* (Paris, 1923), pp. 24, 28, 32, 37.

⁷⁵ Antoine Caracciolo, *Le Mirouer de vraye religion* (Paris, 1544), p. 25.

was familiar with Luther's *De votis monasticis*, apparently translated into French for her by Antoine Papillon in 1524. At first, Luther seems to have envisaged a renewal of monastic life, inviting those in religious orders not to view their vows as a work leading to salvation but as a consequence of their love of God. In 1521, however, he launched an attack on monastic vows on the grounds they had no foundation in Scripture and were often made impiously since, through the application of a human law, monks hoped for salvation, having more confidence in their vows, their merit, and their rule, than in faith in Jesus Christ. If the cloister were to become a kind of school, which individuals might enter and leave freely, where the Bible was read and the gospel preached, Luther was ready to concede a place to monasticism: it might be a vocation like any other, neither better nor worse. But why submit to vows and to a rule if one believes in Scripture and in salvation by faith and the sacrifice of Christ? Moreover, many religious orders, like Cluny in 1524, had forbidden Lutheran books in their houses. One of Luther's disciples, the Franciscan François Lambert, admitted that if he had been allowed to keep them, he would not have left the order. Finally, then, Luther embraced the idea that monasticism must be eliminated since it led to wrong belief and formed an obstacle to the spread of the true gospel. Confronted by a wave of apostasies, Luther, himself a monk, vacillated between urging that vows be abandoned and remaining within an order. In 1521, he wrote to his father in the dedicatory epistle of his *De votis monasticis*: "I am still a monk and yet not a monk. I am a new creature, not of the pope but of Christ."⁷⁶ But subsequently, he abandoned the idea of a renewal of monastic life and of vows and advocated secularization, himself leaving his order and marrying in 1524.⁷⁷ From that point on, abandoning the religious habit was seen as a moment of conversion, a reversal of the taking of vows. For Luther, those called apostates were the true Christians, and monks were apostates to the gospel.

This was not Marguerite's view. The queen did not support the secularization of monasteries; on the contrary, in 1519, the pope allowed her to found the monastery of Essay with a contingent of penitent women from

⁷⁶ Martin Luther, *Works. American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Saint Louis and Philadelphia, 1955–86), 48:335.

⁷⁷ See Le Gall, *Les Moines*, ch. 12. See also Martin Luther, *Jugement sur les vœux monastiques*, *Œuvres*, ed. Marc Lienhard and Matthieu Arnold (Paris, 1999) and Arnold's informative note, pp. 1488–1503. For the letters addressed to monks and nuns, see Matthieu Arnold, ed., *La Correspondance de Luther* (Mainz, 1996), pp. 408–24.

the Madeleine in Paris (*Gallia christiana*, 11:742). Nor did she favor granting regular clergy the freedom to nullify their vows. It is true that, in 1550, the vicar of the archbishop of Avignon, Facchinettis, accused Marguerite, when she passed through the city, of having wrecked his efforts to enforce strict enclosure, increasingly seen as a fourth vow for women religious (Venard, *Réforme*, p. 413). The accusation was made posthumously however, and is contradicted by a variety of actions. In 1526, Marguerite acted to place in other convents a number of nuns who had left La Trinité in Caen (Jourda, *Répertoire*, p. 78). In 1532, she had Robert Cavey, an apostate Premonstratensian whose life was causing scandal, imprisoned in his abbey of Silly. Marguerite did not like scandal or think that Christian liberty authorized social disorder. Her position was rather like that of Erasmus when he discouraged those in religious orders from apostasy for fear of scandal, the worst of all evils (Le Gall, *Les Moines*, p. 580). The gospel might be lived in the cloister.

At the same time, Marguerite did not consider the taking of vows to be incompatible with a belief in salvation by faith. In his *Mirouer de vraye religion*, which was not without raising some suspicion on the part of the Paris Faculty of Theology,⁷⁸ her protégé Caracciolo reminded his readers that “les œuvres et les mérites des hommes ne sont point de si grande soufissance qu'ils puissent mériter la vie éternelle. Mais les mérites de Jésus Christ la nous ont acquise qui tout seul a mérité pour nous et avec son sang payé la dette et le tribut à Dieu” (p. 5). Thus, a religious habit is no guarantee of salvation and the monastic life is not a state of perfection. Faithful to the spirit of Erasmus and of many monastic reformers, Caracciolo argues for a religious life of the spirit, not merely of rites and dress: “L'estat d'un vrai religieux ne consiste point aux cérémonies extérieures... mais plutôt en pureté de cœur en laquelle seulement est promise la vision de Dieu” (p. 6). He denounces those who “dégoisent leur ramaige” during the office: “Dieu aime mieux un cœur humble qu'une voix résonnante ou un art exquis de chanter” (p. 27). He encourages private prayer while not denying the need for regular services or any of the vows; in particular he emphasizes obedience and humility as well as poverty,

⁷⁸ The faculty authorized its printing following an examination by Claude Bertot before a number of doctors, led by the Franciscan Jacques Hugues, found in it two heretical propositions and one erroneous. Bertot intervened, however, to prevent the work from being put on the list of censored books until Caracciolo had time to make corrections and eliminate the errors. See Farge, *Registre*, 2:245, 269, 273.

which should be accompanied by a strong commitment to almsgiving, fasting, and abstinence.

Drawn as strongly as she was to contemplation and union with God, Marguerite could hardly fail to find the cloister appealing, a place dedicated to silence rather than to scholastic disputation and the pride of learning. Caracciolo praised the monastic obligation of silence on the grounds that speech is often lascivious, mean-spirited, and a source of sin; the wisdom of the world is often empty chatter and folly (*Mirouer*, pp. 10–11). Being himself deeply attracted to the eremitic life, Caracciolo recalls that the Desert Fathers broke their silence only to intone the psalms, whereas the monks of his day are “cacqueteurs” and “mauvaises langues” (p. 19). Marguerite de Navarre appreciated in the retreat of contemplative life the possibility of flight from an active life that was frequently tragic. On the other hand, the invitation to silence was not an invitation to ignorance. Although she was skeptical of the vanity of scholastic theology, Marguerite nevertheless loved learning and believed, like Erasmus, that the cloister could be a place to cultivate a pious *otium litteratum*. Caracciolo considered monastic and mystical life to be one of labor not of idleness. Scripture and the Fathers of the Church were to be read; legends and apocryphal fables were to be avoided (*Mirouer*, pp. 4v, 20–21). He encouraged monks to copy texts, because even if printed books were available inexpensively, copying is an act of manual labor that also involves a form of reading conducive to the rumination and memorization of the commandments. At the same time, he also urged monks to correct printed books (p. 22).

The harmony of the cloistered life with its meditation on sacred letters characterizes another monastic network to which Marguerite had ties: Lérins and Saint-Honorat-de-Tarascon. The queen had connections with two Benedictine monks, Denis Faucher and Gregorio Cortese (the future cardinal whose acquaintance she made around 1526).⁷⁹ The contemplative nuns of Tarascon belonged to the *cura monialium* of Lérins. At the initiative of Cardinal Du Bellay, the abbot of Lérins, Denis Faucher undertook the reform of Tarascon with the help of several nuns, one of whom was Scolastique (or Claude) de Bectoz.⁸⁰ The intention was to cultivate the nuns’ mastery of Latin and Greek and encourage their

⁷⁹ On Lérins, see Le Gall, “Le temps des réformes bénédictines.”

⁸⁰ Faucher’s *Opera omnia* are included in Vincent Barral, *Chronologia sanctorum et aliorum virorum illustrium ac abbatum sacrae insulae Lerinensis* (Lyon, 1613), part 2, pp. 222–446. On the initiation of the reform by Du Bellay, see pp. 222 and 285–86.

taste for letters.⁸¹ Some of them, like Sister Scolastique, who was praised by Bonaventure des Periers and Visagier, acquired a reputation among humanists⁸²—a situation that might recall Erasmus's colloquy *The Abbot and the Learned Woman*. In this way, Faucher hoped that his nuns would be able to read and meditate on Scripture with their hearts, not merely with their lips like parrots.⁸³ Beyond that, he may also have sought to promote the education of women since Saint-Honorat took in young girls and offered them schooling.⁸⁴ This veritable sacred Parnassus was also a place of asceticism and penitence however, intended to foster the *reformatio mentis*, the return of the soul to God. Marguerite was acquainted with the literary merits of Sister Scolastique, whom she met during her stay in Avignon in 1538.⁸⁵ In July of that year, Denis Faucher addressed a poem in hendecasyllables to Marguerite, in which he sang the queen's praises (Barral, *Chronologia*, pp. 297, 420). The role played by female religious houses in the education of women is no doubt another element explaining Marguerite's commitment to monastic life. In November 1541, she donated the sum of 175 l.t. to pay the *pensions* of the daughters of her late *maître d'hôtel*, Monsieur de La Mothe, placed in the monasteries and priories of Fontevrault, Beaumont, Gaisne, Rives, and Desloges (Bib. Inst., 1830, fol. 48). In 1546, she paid three years of expenses for a woman to a convent in Blois (Bib. Inst., 1831, fol. 50).

Marguerite was thus much more committed to monastic life than was Luther and she did not hold, as he did, that monastic vocation and evangelical aspirations were incompatible. Indeed, the two kinds of reform, monastic and evangelical, shared a number of characteristics (Le Gall, *Les Moines*, ch. 12). The anti-Franciscanism that Marguerite portrayed in the *Heptaméron* criticizes a form of religious instruction, often aimed at unsuspectingly credulous women, that accorded too much importance to works.⁸⁶ Like Erasmus or Rabelais, Marguerite also denounced the ignorance of monks, the mechanical celebration of the liturgy, and, above all,

⁸¹ Marc Venard, "Humanisme monastique et réforme: Denis Faucher entre l'Italie et la Provence," in *Humanisme et Église en Italie et en France méridionale*, ed. P. Gilli (Rome, 2004), pp. 269–80.

⁸² Saulnier, "Troubles au couvent de Tarascon."

⁸³ Jan N. Pendergrass, *Correspondance d'Antoine Arlier, humaniste languedocien: 1527–1545* (Geneva, 1990), p. 240.

⁸⁴ Pendergrass, *Correspondance d'Antoine Arlier*, p. 244. Arlier's niece studied there.

⁸⁵ Pendergrass, *Correspondance d'Antoine Arlier*, p. 174. Faucher's correspondence indicates that Scolastique de Bectoz wrote to the queen around 1537; Barral, *Chronologia*, p. 280.

⁸⁶ See Gary Ferguson, "Mal vivre, mal croire: l'anticléricisme de l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre," *Seizième Siècle* 6 (2010), 151–63.

the claims of some in the consecrated life to live in a state of perfection. It is even possible that the later waning of her interest in the reform of regular orders reflected a realization that this might proceed from and encourage the idea that religious, by virtue of their vows, are better Christians than their lay brothers and sisters. For all that, the reduction of her efforts in favor of monastic reform does not imply a condemnation of monasticism *per se*. Like Erasmus in the colloquy of *The Soldier and the Carthusian*, she considered the cloister, removed from the turmoil of the world, a place suited to prayer and study, for both women and men. In addition, given Marguerite's neo-Platonist interests, she saw that these places of solitude might favor contemplation, the return of the soul to its creator, union, and deification.⁸⁷ The cloister might be a *locus amoenus* conducive to the Platonic sublimation of earthly love, as seen in *nouvelle* 19 of the *Heptaméron*. Precisely at Lérins—as in the Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua as a whole, which was deeply influenced by the Greek Fathers—the question of the soul's union with God was considered more important than that of salvation, which is a matter of confidence in Christ's promises. Monastic vows were less a way to salvation than a way to divine contemplation.⁸⁸

Marguerite's attachment to monasticism, at precisely the time when the Reformation was in the process of eliminating it, is also an element in her continued fidelity to Catholicism. Other factors also call for examination. Moving from place to place throughout her life, Marguerite frequently took the opportunity to make a pilgrimage. In 1515, she went to Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines, to la Sainte-Baume, and Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:47). In March 1529, she journeyed to Notre-Dame-de-Cléry in order to fulfill a vow made during the illness of her daughter (*ibid.*, 1:154); she would return to Cléry with Queen Éléonore in 1534 and with the king in 1544 (*ibid.*, 1:304 and Jourda, *Répertoire*, p. 133). In a letter written sometime between 1527 and 1531, she also asked Montmorency to pray for her, should he go to Notre-Dame-de-Liesse (Génin, *Lettres*, p. 151). Marguerite's devotion to the Virgin Mary is clear. Nor did she reject relics. In 1537, during a visit to Limoges, the city offered her some as a gift (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:227). On 16 January 1538, the papal nuncio encountered Marguerite in Montpellier cathedral, where she had attended

⁸⁷ Abel Lefranc, *Marguerite de Navarre et le platonisme de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1897). See especially his reading of the poem addressed to the abbess of Fontevault.

⁸⁸ See Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua* (Oxford, 1985).

vespers and gone to see the relics.⁸⁹ The way she distributed alms, moreover, shows her respect for the liturgical calendar of saints' days and feast days. Thus her *secrétaire des finances* recorded that she donated 37 écus d'or in October 1541, a month that had 31 days, four Fridays, and two fast days for the vigils of Saints Simon and Jude and All Saints (Bib. Inst., 1830, fol. 53). In December 1542, she purchased a large enamel image of an apostle (ibid., fol. 111).

Monks, pilgrimages to Marian shrines, relics: so many signs that Marguerite did not break with the communion of saints; so many signs, it seems to me, that add up to much more than Abel Lefranc's "indices fort rares et bien peu symptomatiques de catholicisme" (*Idées*, p. 23). Others could also be alleged. Around 1543, Marguerite had a Dominican confessor (Jourda, *Marguerite*, 1:300); indeed, over time, her personal staff of religious grew: in addition to her two *aumôniers*, she had two, then three, chaplains, one cleric assigned to her chapel, then two.⁹⁰ In short, Marguerite would seem a strange Lutheran—or else, a genuine Catholic.

And yet a recent study, the most informative since Jourda's biography, puts back in circulation the idea of an evangelical Marguerite, where evangelical means covert Lutheran. Jonathan Reid believes that, given her position, Marguerite was obliged to remain silent and that it is therefore not in her literary works that her sensibilities and her convictions may be discerned, but through those with whom she corresponded, her protégés, her entourage. And these, for the most part, were Evangelicals (*King's Sister*, 1:63–64). According to this view, Marguerite militated for a reform led by the king that might have led to a break with Rome (2:474, 501, 514). A staunch supporter of English interests in France, oriented more toward Germany than Italy, she is seen as having advocated alliances with Lutheran princes in order to promote the triumph of the gospel in France—affinities that slanted her Evangelism toward Lutheranism (1:83, 42–43). Marguerite is thus said to have mobilized a network of writers and infiltrated the system of benefices and even the inquisitorial structures by placing men, committed as she was, to the cause of the true gospel (2:385–87). Either before or after Marguerite's death, many of these writers and bishops were suspected of heresy. As exemplified by her daughter Jeanne d'Albret, the legacy of this "Navarrian network" is said to be the Protestant Reformation in France (1:13). The argument is forceful and detailed.

⁸⁹ *Correspondance des nonces en France: Carpi et Ferrerio*, p. 338.

⁹⁰ Lefranc and Boulenger, *Comptes de Louise de Savoie*, p. 73.

In the light of the evidence presented in this chapter however, it meets certain objections. First of all, to speak of a “Navarrian network” supposes that Marguerite was at the heart of a structured web which was not merely a collection of diverse individuals, that she was the “captain” of the group, in Briçonnet’s expression (*King’s Sister*, 1:186). In using this term however, the bishop of Meaux was encouraging the then duchess to take on that role, rather than describing an established fact. As the sister of the king, Marguerite received requests of all kinds from many people; sometimes she replied favorably, at other times not. Yet she was always a focus for people’s hopes. A request or a dedication reflects not the reality of a situation, but what is hoped for. François I did not become a partisan of the Reformation as a result of Calvin’s dedication to him of the *Institutes of Christian Religion*. If Martin Bucer took Marguerite’s domains for “petites Germanies,” we are not required to subscribe to the same view (2:393). The danger is to take Marguerite for what many people wanted her to be and particularly to fall into this trap when reading ambassadorial reports. Diplomatic envoys told their sovereign what he or she wanted to hear. The English ambassador reports a conversation with the queen of Navarre in which she views the pope as the Antichrist (*ibid.*, 1:63, 2:497). His desire to confessionalize diplomatic relations is palpable. At the same time, the nuncio describes Marguerite as the pope’s strongest ally. To whom should we give credence? Each man sees, to some extent, what he wants to see.

In order to reach a conclusion, we must leave aside the interested statements of those with whom Marguerite had dealings and judge her by her actions. We must take into consideration her interventions to protect partisans of the gospel from persecution, but also her fidelity to Rome, her respect for Church hierarchy, her attachment to the Eucharist and to monastic life, and her Marian piety. In all these respects, she is close neither to the schismatic king of England nor to the Lutheran princes of Germany.

Marguerite’s network is described by Reid from the point of view of those who were Evangelicals or who would become heretics long after the death of their protector, like the bishop of Troyes, Caracciolo, or Vergerio. But her most important protégé, Cardinal Georges d’Armagnac, remained a faithful Catholic, as did the Cardinal de Tournon.⁹¹ Marguerite certainly had connections with inquisitors whose orthodoxy was called into question, like Arnaud de Badet or Louis de Rochette. She also had ties to other

⁹¹ In relation to Armagnac, see Nicole Lemaitre and Charles Samaran, eds., *Correspondance du cardinal Georges d’Armagnac*, vol. 1 (Paris, 2007).

inquisitors, however—like Daniel Moron, to whom she gave a pension in January 1547 and again in 1548—who, because they were never suspect, are less visible to the historian (Bib. Inst., 1831, fols. 49 and 54). In the same way, not all of the writers connected to Marguerite were suspected of heresy, nor did they all become Reformed. In 1542, she paid an annual pension of 200 l.t. to the University of Bourges for Jacques Amyot, who came to Berry with Abbot Jacques Colin, *lecteur royal*, who opened a school in Saint-Ambroise (ibid., fol. 15). The future *grand aumônier* to Charles IX and bishop of Auxerre, known for his translation of Plutarch, was never subject to any investigation. But even certain suspect writers, like Rabelais, remained within the Catholic fold. Having been suspect, having had to flee the country, having been imprisoned, or having connections to men or women who did break with Rome, does not necessarily mean that one has left the Catholic Church. Take the case of Denis Faucher. Here is a man connected to Marguerite, but also to Salmon Macrin, Jean-Baptiste Folengo, Charles de Sainte-Marthe, Jean Visagier, as well as with Cardinal Du Bellay and later the Cardinal de Lorraine and Cardinal Bertrand.⁹² Nuns opposed to the reform of Tarascon tried to make him out to be suspect of heresy. These various connections would qualify him for inclusion in the “Navarrian network” and even under the evangelical banner. Yet this same man congratulated Meynier d’Oppède on the repression of the Waldensians and wrote to Sainte-Marthe in July 1540, urging him to beware of heresy.⁹³

Was Marguerite then an Evangelical or a Catholic? In the final analysis, labels matter little as long as we are clear about their meaning. Certainly she was a Catholic, as long as we recognize also her commitment to salvation by faith, to the reform of the body of the faithful, to reading Scripture in the vernacular, and to the non-confessionalization of diplomatic alliances. She was also an Evangelical, as long as the term signifies a desire for the reform of the Gallican Church within the Roman Church, under the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and encompasses her attachment to monastic life, to the Eucharist, and to Marian piety.

⁹² Barral, *Chronologia*, pp. 308, 309, 327, 431.

⁹³ “Dolui Sammarthane carissime ubi te in tam grave discrimen adductum accepi quo vita tua periclitaretur sed dolore poenae contabui quod de religione male sentire te aiebant et haereticorum opiniones erroneas obfirmatio animo sustinere. . . . Mi Sammarthane te hortor et pro mutua nostras benevolentia rogo ut talem te praestes quem nulla opinio mala unquam a firmite sinceritaeque fidei catholicae nec ulla tribulatio a mentis statu et viti sapientis dignitatis possit dimovere,” Barral, *Chronologia*, p. 429.

NEO-PLATONIC THEMES OF ASCENT IN MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE

Philip Ford

Là, sous tes piedz, les saisons
Recueillent leurs pas qui glissent,
Là, tu connois les raisons
Des longs jours qui s'apetissent,
Tu scais pourquoy le Soleil,
Ores palle, ores vermeil
Predit le vent & la pluye,
Et le serain qui l'essuye,
Tu scais les deux trains de l'eau,
Ou si c'est l'air qui sejourne,
Ou si la Terre qui tourne
Nous porte comme un bateau.¹

Ronsard's "Hymne triumphal," from the *Tombeau* on the death of Marguerite de Navarre published by Nicolas Denisot in 1551, includes, amongst many other themes, a section on the knowledge which the queen will have gained as a result of the liberation of her soul from the body (vv. 397–432). This important (neo-)Platonic notion, linked to the theory of knowledge as reminiscence expounded in Plato's *Phaedo*, points to the association of her philosophical and religious ideas, at least in the minds of her contemporaries, with certain aspects of neo-Platonism, and there are certainly elements of neo-Platonic love present in the *Heptaméron* as well as other apparently neo-Platonic themes in her religious poetry. This essay will explore the possible origins of these ideas in her intellectual and spiritual development, and their presence in her writing.

Nevertheless, the precise role of neo-Platonism in Marguerite's thinking has been hotly debated, as Stephen Murphy points out in the introduction to his edition of J. de La Haye's French translation of Marsilio Ficino's *De amore*.² An important article by Christine Martineau, which took

¹ Pierre de Ronsard, "Hymne triumphal sur le trepas de Marguerite de Navarre," vv. 409–20, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Paul Laumonier, 20 vols. (Paris, 1924–75), 3:74.

² Symon Silvius [J. de La Haye], *Le Commentaire de Marsile Ficin, Florentin: sur le Banquet d'Amour de Platon*, ed. Stephen Murphy (Paris, 2004), pp. 15–16. Murphy states, somewhat menacingly for this chapter, that "le cas [in favor of Marguerite's neo-Platonism] a été longuement débattu sans qu'on puisse conclure." He also points out that, contrary to

issue with the way in which she saw Abel Lefranc blurring the distinctions between Platonism, religious neo-Platonism, and neo-Platonic love theories, has to a certain extent defined the terms of the debate.³ While Martineau sees no problem in accepting the idea of a strong neo-Platonic influence on Marguerite de Navarre's religious thinking, as a result of the teaching of Guillaume Briçonnet, she perceives no presence of Ficinian notions of love in the French queen's writing. In what follows, we shall attempt to reconsider these important issues by examining how her ideas may have developed and entered into her writing. However, in doing so, it will be important to remember that Marguerite was neither a philosopher nor a theologian, and that consequently she was receiving many of the ideas that she embraced second or third hand. In many cases, it will be the images with which these ideas are associated rather than necessarily the underlying theory that will have the most impact on her writing.

Influences on Marguerite's Thinking

Like her brother, the future François I, Marguerite d'Angoulême would have received a reasonably full education thanks to the encouragement of her mother Louise de Savoie. After the death of her husband, Charles d'Angoulême, in 1496, Louise moved in 1499 with her children to the château d'Amboise, one of the residences of the king, Louis XII, where Marguerite and François were taught by François de Moulins (de Rochefort) and Robert Hurault, reputedly men who were open to new ideas. She would have been schooled in Latin as well as the vernacular.⁴ The accession of François to the throne in 1515 not only provided Marguerite with a prominent role in court life, it also gave her access to important humanist thinkers such as Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who became her *directeur de conscience* and introduced her in 1521 to his friend Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux. It is largely through her correspondence with the latter, which

what is frequently stated, "il n'est dit nulle part que Marguerite de Navarre ait demandé à son valet de chambre [J. de La Haye] de faire cette traduction," though the first element in the book, after the *privilege*, is a poem dedicated to the queen (p. 21).

³ Christine Martineau, "Le Platonisme de Marguerite de Navarre?," *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* 4 (1976), 12–35. The work she takes issue with is Abel Lefranc, *Les Idées religieuses de Marguerite de Navarre d'après son œuvre poétique* (Paris, 1898; Geneva, 1969).

⁴ On Marguerite's education, see, for example, Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978), 1:20–25.

began in June 1521 and continued until the end of 1524, that Marguerite's religious ideas were able to develop.⁵

Early on, Marguerite had shown an interest in the ideas of Erasmus and Luther, and was clearly attracted to a form of spirituality that was not being provided by traditional Catholicism. In particular, she appears to have been convinced by the Scripture-based theology that Briçonnet practiced, influenced by certain neo-Platonic ideas deriving from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and later writers such as Nicholas of Cusa. Some of the central ideas from these Platonizing Christian sources include the relationship between the soul and the body, the nature of the divine, and the possibility of knowledge of and union with God. In the exchange of letters between Marguerite and the bishop, we see him expounding his ideas in a highly metaphorical language, based predominantly on biblical sources.

The influence of Briçonnet on Marguerite's thinking has, of course, been the subject of some scholarly exposition, notably in recent years by Jacob Vance.⁶ As he points out, the precise relationship between the soul and God is at the heart of Briçonnet's, essentially Augustinian, theology.⁷ Citing in particular letter 64 (*Correspondance*, 2:53–59), Vance explains Briçonnet's notion of the lantern of the soul, which can bring spiritual enlightenment. After the Fall, man's soul, which previously had access to divine knowledge, is cut off from any direct apprehension of God, and his reason too is incapable of achieving this. However, the "lanterne raisonnable estaincte a esté illuminée par l'esprit de vie" (that is by the coming of Jesus into the world) and, depending on the "disposicion et pureté de l'ame," God, the source of true light, conceals himself there "par grace à ce que l'ame illumine le corps" (*Correspondance*, 2:55). God's grace, in other words, acts on the soul to illuminate man with divine truth thanks to the coming of Jesus into the world.

The parallels with Ficino's explanations of the workings of love in his commentary on the *Symposium* are not hard to find and, like Briçonnet,

⁵ See Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79).

⁶ See Jacob Vance, "Humanist Polemics, Christian Morals: A Hypothesis on Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* and the Problem of Self-Love," *MLN: Modern Language Notes* 120 Supplement (2005), S181–95, and "Préréforme et mysticisme: l'articulation du secret dans la correspondance de Guillaume Briçonnet et Marguerite de Navarre," in *D'un principe philosophique à un genre littéraire: les "Secrets,"* ed. Dominique de Courcelles (Paris, 2005), pp. 241–62.

⁷ See Vance, "Préréforme et mysticisme," p. 254.

Ficino is drawing on the same theological sources. In the words of La Haye's translation of the *De amore* with which Marguerite was associated:⁸

Non sans cause Denys compare dieu au soleil: pource que tout ainsi que le soleil donne clarté au corps, et l'eschauffe, semblablement dieu baille clarté aux esprits de verité, et ardeur de charité. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, p. 54)

Thus, if she read Ficino, Marguerite would have discovered the use of a similar set of images to those expounded by Briçonnet through which the nature of the soul's relationship with God is explained.

It is indeed the importance of imagery, as a means of adumbrating divine and philosophical truths, that Marguerite would have learnt from her correspondence with Briçonnet. Often in the correspondence, it is she who provides the initial image, and he who develops it, in a style of exegesis which would no doubt have been inspired by his clerical duties as preacher. The opening of Briçonnet's letter 60 in the edition of the *Correspondance* illustrates his method of presenting an idea in biblically inspired imagery, followed by an exegetical section aimed at clarifying his thought. Marguerite, in her letter to the bishop dating from before 24 June 1523, had referred to Luke 5:1–11, the miraculous draught of fishes which led to Jesus's recruitment of Simon Peter as disciple:

Estant le labeur de nuict infructueux, pour neant, Madame, qui en cecité travaille se lyeve avant le jour, lequel luisant en noz tenebres commande mener le navire de foy en hault et gecter en sa parolle le rez de noz operations et sollicitudes en la dexterité de la providence et bonté divine. Laquelle, comme ne destitue les humbles, qui de soy rien et de Dieu tout presument et actendent, aussy qui en leur force et vertus se glorifient, humillie. Par l'amplitude et grandeur de foy, est mené le navire en la haulte mer de l'infinitude divine, en la profundité de laquelle Esperance gecte le retz que Charité remplit en latitude sy très-exuberante qu'elle est contraincte communiquer à ses compaignons qui sont en l'autre navire. En celuy de Pierre (qui est l'ame congnoissante) est assiz Jesus l'instruisant (et par luy aultres) sortir de terre et par contemplacion aller en hault où est sa naissance. Là, enyvree et plaine d'ymportable plenitude, se descharge et en communique à son corps, qui est le grand navire, par telle equalité et division que les deux sont egallement remplies en telle plenitude que sy plus en avoient seroient en danger de submersion; mais charité tousjours se distribue selon la mesure et capacité de la foy.

⁸ Although La Haye's translation was not printed until 1546, it is a relatively faithful version of Ficino's text and offers a good indication of the kind of philosophical language that Marguerite would have been familiar with in the vernacular. For these reasons, we will use La Haye's translation of Ficino in this chapter rather than the original Latin.

Les deux navires sont l'ame et le corps, uniz par grandeur et charité; les compaignons sont les sens de l'esperit et du corps, par lesquelz excersent respectativement leurs operacions, predominant l'ame, et seulle gectant le retz et, après la prinse, appellant le navire corporel et ses compaignons, non pour dominer, mais pour le vivifier, remplir et communiquer la pasture vitale par foy, en esperance de charité receue. (*Correspondance*, 2:45)

The images which Brignonnet develops here are inspired by the passage from Luke. The future disciple has been fishing all night without catching anything, but when Jesus instructs him to cast his net in the middle of Lake Gennesaret, he pulls in so many fish that his net breaks and he needs to share the catch with a second ship on the lake. Brignonnet uses the incident here to develop the neo-Platonic theme of the ascent of the soul. The first paragraph picks up on the details of the New Testament story, while already suggesting the allegorical status that they have: the "haulte mer" in the lake, where Jesus instructs Peter to cast his net, is the "infinitude divine" of heavenly love, Peter's ship represents the soul, while the other ship is the body. The soul is told by Jesus to "leave the earth and through contemplation to ascend to where it was born," an important neo-Platonic theme which we already find in a Christian context in Boethius.⁹ However, this first level of allegorical exegesis is still operating on a poetic level, and it is followed in the second paragraph by a far more straightforward description of the workings of the soul, through faith, on the body.

The manner of composition that we find here clearly influenced the way in which Marguerite thought about and described her own religious feelings. All the details of the New Testament story are commented on and explained, so that nothing is seen as lacking in significance. For example, when Jesus arrives at the lakeside, he "saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing

⁹ The idea of the pre-existence and heavenly origin of the human soul, expounded by Plato in the *Phaedo*, is not part of traditional Christian thinking, but may be found in some Platonizing writers such as Boethius, who writes in the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, 3.11: "Non omne namque mente depulit lumen / Obliviosam corpus inuehens molem. / Haeret profecto semen introrsum ueri / Quod excitatur uentilante doctrina. / Nam cur rogati sponte recta censetis, / Ni mersus alto uiueret fomes corde? / Quod si Platonis Musa personat uerum, / Quod quisque discit immemor recordatur." ("For the body, which brings its mass of forgetfulness, has not deprived our minds of all light. A seed of truth remains within us, which is roused by the winds of learning. For why do you think when questioned we give the right answer spontaneously, unless the sparks lie buried deep in our hearts? If Plato's Muse proclaims the truth, whatever we learn, we remember having once forgotten it." My translation.)

their nets.”¹⁰ The net-washing is seen not as an incidental detail, but as a highly symbolic act which indicates their desire to be reborn in Christ:

Par les pecheurs estantz en terre, lavans leurs retz, nous est declaré leur esperance estant terrestre et, par ce, corrompue, qu'ilz ne pourroient nesoier, combien qu'ilz eussent innumerables lavemens, jusques à ce qu'ilz ont esté visitéz par le second Adam celeste, qui leur a commandé laisser la terre et monter audict estang de Genesareth pour estre regeneréz en nouvelle nativité celeste. (*Correspondance*, 2:46)

This attention to detail will find its way into Marguerite's poetry.

Neo-Platonic Religious Imagery in Marguerite's Poetical Works

One of the central points of some ancient forms of neo-Platonism and certainly of Ficinian neo-Platonism was to bring Platonic thinking into line with Christian doctrine.¹¹ This was aided in many ways by Platonizing tendencies to be found in Saint Paul as well as in that most important of the western Church fathers, Saint Augustine. Renaissance humanists were quick to seize upon the resemblances between the two systems, often focusing on the similar imagery to be found in each of them, while dismissing the incompatible elements through the deft use of allegory. For this reason, it should come as no surprise that there can be a blurring between neo-Platonic and Christian imagery in Marguerite's religious poetry. However, there are certain themes which it is worth highlighting as being informed by neo-Platonic ideas, whether or not Marguerite had read the source texts at first hand: just as many writers today may invoke Darwinian theories of evolution without having read *On the Origin of Species*, the pervading mentality in Renaissance France meant that neo-Platonic ideas were simply in the air.

One frequently used image is that of the body as the prison of the soul. This central Platonic idea was expounded in the *Phaedo*, a dialogue itself set in the prison where Socrates had been condemned to die by hemlock. The body is presented as a hindrance to contemplation, in part because our sense perceptions are at best deceptive and at worst distracting, preventing the true work of the soul: “The lovers of knowledge are conscious

¹⁰ Luke 5:2, Authorized King James Version.

¹¹ See D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1972), esp. ch. 3, “The Ancient Theology in Sixteenth-Century France.”

that their souls, when philosophy receives them, are simply fastened and glued to their bodies: the soul is only able to view existence through the bars of a prison, and not in her own nature; she is wallowing in the mire of all ignorance" (*Phaedo*, 82d–e).¹² This image was further elaborated by Plato in the myth of the cavern, in Book 7 of the *Republic*, 514ff., where man is presented as a prisoner, chained up with his back to the light, only able to see shadows on a wall. Ficino picks up these ideas in his *Platonica theologia de immortalitate animorum*, using them to suggest the need for a progressive ascent of the soul from the realm of nature to the realm of ideas by means of the effective use of light imagery:

But if, by chance, one of the prisoners is released and is forced to turn round and gaze at the flame and the objects in front of the flame, he will immediately be dazzled and in pain, and because of the brightness he will be unable to discern the objects whose shadows he saw a moment before. He will suffer even more if he is suddenly dragged from the cave to the constant light of day. And so it is not suddenly, but gradually, in suitable degrees, that he should be led from the shadows of things to the things themselves, from the reflection of light to the actual light, such that the things which are before the prisoners in the cave should be seen first of all reflected in water before being seen in themselves. (Ficino, *Platonica theologia*, 6.2.23)¹³

"Souls of mortal men," he exclaims, "leave, I beg you, the bodies in which you are now buried, and you will immediately find your true nature beyond the confines of your bodies."¹⁴

These themes, which are often associated, as they were in the *Phaedo*, with consolation on the death of a loved one, recur in Marguerite's poetry. For example, among the poems written after the death of her niece Charlotte, aged eight, in 1524, Marguerite has the little girl address her soul as follows:

¹² The translation is by Benjamin Jowett, available, for example, on The Internet Classics Archive, <<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedo.html>>, accessed 7 June 2011.

¹³ My translation of the Latin text in Marsile Ficino, *Théologie platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes*, ed. and trans. Raymond Marcel, 3 vols. (Paris, 1964–70): "Si quis autem horum qui vincti sunt forte solvatur subitoque lampadem et alia sub illa quae sequuntur a tergo, retro versus intueri cogatur, caligabit protinus et dolebit, ac propter splendorem intueri non poterit illa quorum umbras paulo ante cernebat. Multoque magis id illi malum continget, si a spelunca sursum ad caeleste diuturnumque lumen repente trahatur. Quare non subito, sed paulatim convenientibus gradibus ab umbris rerum ad res ipsas, item a luminis imagine ad lumen ipsum est perducendus, ita ut quae in spelunca sunt apud illos, prius illic in aqua videat quam ibidem in seipsis inspicat."

¹⁴ *Théologie platonicienne*, 6.2.234: "Emergite, obsecro, mortalium animae nunc immer-sae corporibus, naturam vestram supra corporis fines statim reperietis."

Saillez dehors, mon ame, je vous prie,
 Du triste corps tout plein de fascherie
 Où vous estes en obscure prison,
 Pour parvenir à la belle maison
 Avec les saintz et de leur confrairie.¹⁵

The Christian ending of the stanza follows on quite naturally from the neo-Platonic opening. Picking up and developing the imagery of the cavern myth in Plato's *Republic*, Marguerite also returns to this theme in *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, first published in 1531:

Voila comment en peine, criz, et pleurs
 En terre gist sans clarte ne lumiere
 Ma paouvre ame, esclave et prisonniere,
 Les piedz liez par sa concupiscence
 Et les deux bras par son acoustumance.¹⁶

The soul here is in exactly the position of Plato's prisoners as described by Ficino, for while Plato speaks of them as having "their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads," it is Ficino who adds the detail of the arms, describing the prisoners as "attached by the neck, *with their hands tied behind their backs* and their feet to various columns."¹⁷ Perhaps it is inspired by Briçonnet's exegetical approach that Marguerite allegorizes the bound feet and hands as representing the forces of "concupiscence" (lust, desire) and "acoustumance" (custom), introducing yet again a Christian note into the image.

Later in the same poem, Marguerite takes up a theme that had been developed by Briçonnet in one of his early letters to her on the antithesis between All and Nothing (*Correspondance*, 1:32). The soul's realization of its nothingness allows its gradual ascension toward the All of God.¹⁸

¹⁵ Marguerite de Navarre, *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, ed. Renja Salminen (Helsinki, 1985), *Rondeaux*, 1.1–5. Text based on MS 3525 of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

¹⁶ The text is taken from the edition published by Simon Du Bois (Alençon, 1533), containing the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* . . . *Le miroir de l'ame pecheresse* . . . *Discord estant en l'homme* . . . *Une oraison à nostre seigneur Jesus Christ*, fol. A2r–v, vv. 24–30.

¹⁷ "ita cervicem et manus a tergo pedesque columnis quibusdam alligatos" (*Platonica theologia*, 6.2.232).

¹⁸ "Mais quant à luy par amour est unie, / Sy remply est son riens d'ung peu de tout / Que à declarer ne poeut trouver le bout: / Plus ha de bien qu'il n'en poeut soustenir: / Parquoy il croit tout le monde tenir" (*Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, vv. 1326–30).

In the *Miroir*, Marguerite links this with light imagery which, as in Ficino's commentary on the prisoners' introduction to light in *Republic* 7, emphasizes its initial blinding effect on the viewer and, despite his desire to see more, the impossibility of achieving this all at once:

Quant le soleil d'une seule estincelle
 Aveugle l'oeil, sa grand lumiere cele:
 Mais demandez à l'oeil qu'il a senty,
 Il dira, tout: mais il aura menty.
 Car aveugle de petite lumiere
 Il ne poeut veoir la grand clarte entiere:
 Et demeure toutesvoyaes sy content
 Qu'il luy semble s'il en avait autant
 N'estre puissant pour pouvoir endurer
 Ceste clarte, qu'il ne poeut mesurer.
 Aussi le cueur qui par façon subtile
 Sent de l'amour de dieu une scintille
 Treuve ce feu sy grand et sy terrible,
 Si doux, si bon, qu'il ne luy est possible
 Dire que c'est d'amour. (*Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, vv. 1331–45)

Marguerite may be thinking here of Ficino's description, in *De amore*, 2.7, of the transmission of the spark of beauty from the heavenly Venus, through the common Venus, down to the human world:

La premiere [Venus] premierement comprend en soy la resplendisseur de la divinité, puis apres attire icelle à Venus seconde. La seconde, verse d'ung lieu en aultres les estincelles de ceste resplendisseur, en la matiere du monde. Par la presence de ces estincelles, tous les corps du monde, selon la capacité de nature, semblent estre beaulx. L'esprit humain voit par les yeux la beauté des corps. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, pp. 62–63)

Just as this spark passes through various stages in its descent, the soul must also pass back through them in its ascent, an elaboration of the idea which Ficino had expounded in the *Platonica theologia*.

The loss of her brother, François I, in 1547 led Marguerite to write *La Navire*, a dialogue between the dead king and his sister in which he exhorts her to abandon her grieving for him. Interestingly, from the point of view of the Briçonnet letter we explored earlier, the poem begins with the image of the ship as soul, with François enjoining his sister to leave behind earthly things:

Navire loing du vray port assablée,
 Feuille agitée de l'impetueux vent,
 Ame qui est de douleur accablée,

Tire toy hors de ton corps non sçavant,
 Monte à l'espoir, laisse ta vielle masse,
 Sans regarder derriere viens avant.

Quant seras tu de ton fol pleurer lasse?
 Quant auras tu mis fin à ton souspir?
 Quant lairras tu ta triste et pasle face?

Quant donra Foy tresve à ton vain desir
 Et quant fera ton œil torner en hault
 La Charité, où est le vray plaisir?¹⁹

The body from which the soul must leave is characterized as being “non sçavant,” and the (neo-)Platonic notion of knowledge, gained from the release of the soul, is a central one in this poem. Important, too, is the idea of the ascent to heaven, through Love, in the last stanza quoted. This seems to echo Ficino’s *De amore*, 2.2, where divine beauty is the starting point of a converting triad, consisting of Beauty, Love, and Pleasure, leading back to heaven:²⁰

Veritablement ceste Beaulté divine a en tous engendré Amour, c’est à dire, ung soubhayt de soymesme: car si Dieu attire à soy le monde, et le monde est attiré, c’est ung attirement s’entresuyvant, qui tousjours dure, commencement à Dieu, passant par le monde, et à la parfin finissant en Dieu: lequel presques par ung cercle de rechef retourne à ce mesme dont est coulé. Par ainsi donques ung et mesme cercle, de Dieu au monde, et du monde à Dieu, est appellé par troys noms. Selon qu’en Dieu il commence et attrait, Beaulté, selon que passant par le monde, le ravist Amour, selon que retournant à son autheur, luy conjoint son œuvre, volupté. Ce a baillé à entendre ceste belle chanson de Hierotheus et Denys Areopagite, en laquelle ainsi ont chanté Theologiens: Amour est ung cercle bon, veu que du bon estant né, retourne au bon. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, pp. 53–54)

François hopes that, through the agency of *Charité*, divine love, Marguerite’s soul will be brought to the *volupté*, the pure joy, of heaven. Ficino’s text makes this neo-Platonic cycle clear, but it is important to note that he validates it by reference to Dionysius the Areopagite (*De divinis nominibus*, 14.712d). Later in *La Navire*, the dead king reveals to his sister some of the pleasures he enjoys and which she too can obtain:

¹⁹ Marguerite de Navarre, *La Navire ou Consolation du roi François I^{er} à sa sœur Marguerite*, ed. Robert Marichal (Paris, 1956), vv. 1–12.

²⁰ For an important discussion of this triad in the visual arts, relating to the three Graces in Botticelli’s *Primavera*, see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1980), pp. 36–52.

Tourne ton plainct en chantz et en louanges,
Crois fermement le plaisir que je sens,
Et ton ennuy à mon grand plaisir changes.

.....

Je gousté icy la haulte sapience,
Je voys icy la puissance infinie
Et la bonté me monstre sa science.

Mon ame icy de lumiere est garnie,
Qui en tenebre estoit vivante en terre,
Estant de veoir son vray soleil bannie.

Je voys icy l'esclair dont le tonnerre
Faict là-bas paour à un cueur escarté,
Qui sans la foy en chacun chemin erre.

Icy d'amour est la vraye clarté,
Icy se faict de charité le feu,
Et gaigne icy qui mieulx a escarté. (*La Navire*, vv. 403–05, 412–23)

As in the opening quotation of this essay by Ronsard, the release of the soul brings “la haulte sapience,” knowledge that cannot be gained when we are living in darkness on earth, but which divine love reveals to us through its “vraye clarté.”

The texts cited in this section are illustrative of the neo-Platonic themes to be found in Marguerite’s spiritual poetry, and certainly do not exhaust the range of possible material. Christine Martineau cites others in her article, as does Yon Oria.²¹ The images we have discussed—the imprisoned soul, the light imagery, the ascent of the soul—are part of syncretist thinking in Renaissance Europe as a result of Ficino’s reading of Plato, and it is significant that he, like Guillaume Briçonnet, drew on Pseudo-Dionysius to act as guarantor for the ideas that he was expounding. This common ground between Briçonnet and Ficino would no doubt have encouraged Marguerite to take the writings of the Florentine neo-Platonist seriously. How widely she would have read his works is debatable, though it would be surprising if she had not read his commentary on the *Symposium*, and we have seen possible echoes of this work in her poetry.²² At the same

²¹ See Martineau, “Le Platonisme,” pp. 17–24, and Yon Oria, “Platonic Symbolism of Marguerite d’Angoulême [sic] in the Royal Courts of France and Navarre (1492–1549),” *Príncipe de Viana* 177 (1986), 319–29.

²² Nevertheless, the Latin text would only have been available in printed form to Marguerite in Ficino’s edition of the *Platonis Opera* (Florence, 1484). Ficino’s own Italian translation of the *De Amore*, the *Sopra lo amore o ver’ Convito di Platone* was printed by

time, as has already been pointed out, it seems unnecessary to require a first-hand knowledge of Ficino or of other neo-Platonic texts in order to see Marguerite's thought and poetic imagery as being influenced by neo-Platonism. It is enough that she should have understood and assimilated the ideas in question, and used them in her own writing.

Neo-Platonic Love in the Heptaméron

We come now to the issue of neo-Platonic thinking in the *Heptaméron*, whose presence is questioned to some extent by Christine Martineau, though not entirely dismissed ("Le Platonisme," pp. 27–35). The world that Marguerite portrays in the collection is a mostly grim one, in which bestial appetites have the upper hand over more spiritual values. Moreover, the value systems of men and women are entirely incompatible: male honor resides in notching up as many sexual conquests as possible, female honor in avoiding even the slightest hint of scandal through their conduct. Thus, the two sexes are constantly being characterized by the *devisants* as polar opposites. As Parlamente says to her husband Hircan in the discussion following *nouvelle* 26, alluding to the differences between the sexes:

Je sçay bien . . . que nous avons tous besoing de la grace de Dieu, pour ce que nous sommes tous encloz en peché; si est-ce que nos tentations ne sont pareilles aux vostres, et si nous pechons par orgueil, nul tiers n'en a dommage, ny nostre corps et noz mains n'en demeurent souillées. Mais vostre plaisir gist à deshonor les femmes, et vostre honneur à tuer les hommes en guerre: qui sont deux poinctz formellement contraires à la loy de Dieu.²³

Most of the tales illustrate the selfishness of love or lust, and the impossibility of the two sexes living together in harmony. Marguerite is depicting for us man in a state of sin, deprived of grace.

Filippo Giunti in Florence in 1544, and, as we have seen, J. de La Haye's French version came out in 1546. There were various MS versions in circulation; see Marsile Ficino, *Commentaire sur Le Banquet de Platon, De l'amour, Commentarium in Convivium Platonis, De amore*, ed. and trans. Pierre Laurens (Paris, 2002), pp. CXVII–CXXII. Other works, including Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore* (Rome, 1535) and Symphorien Champier's *Le Livre de vraye amour* (Lyon, 1503), would have conveyed aspects of Ficino's thinking. James Wadsworth limits the material taken by Champier from Ficino to three sections: *De amore*, 1.4 ("De utilitate amoris"), 2.3 ("Pulchritudo est splendor divine bonitatis"), and 2.8 ("Exhortatio ad amorem, De amore simplici ac mutuo"); see Symphorien Champier, *Le Livre de vraye amour*, ed. James B. Wadsworth (The Hague, 1962), p. 31. For a modern translation of the *Dialoghi d'amore*, see Leone Ebreo, *Dialogues of Love*, trans. Cosmos Damian Bacich and Rosella Pescatori (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2009). Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples would, however, have read Ficino and could well have discussed his works with Marguerite.

²³ Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Michel François (Paris, 1967), p. 221.

However, very occasionally, a higher form of love can be discerned, based on neo-Platonic ideals. We have already noted possible echoes of Ficino's *De amore* in Marguerite's spiritual poetry, and although J. de La Haye's French translation was not published until 1546, the author's dedication to the queen at the very least indicates an interest on her part. Speaking of the return of heavenly love to earth, the liminary poem refers, while punning on the translator's name, to the welcome offered by Marguerite to the winged god:

Lors fort joyeux brandist son æsle gaye
 Et doucement se mist sur une Haye,
 Où quelque temps son repos il a pris,
 Et puis apres d'ung desir feut espris
 D'aller vers vous, ayant bien cognoissance
 Qu'il seroit là en plus grande asseurance
 Et mieulx traicté, d'une vraye Princesse,
 Que Cupido d'une feincte Deesse. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, p. 42)

But what aspects of Ficino's commentary find their way into the *Heptaméron*?

The relationship between Ficino's commentary and Plato's *Symposium* is an odd one. In Plato, a number of guests at the banquet speak in various ways, both serious and comic, in praise of love, but it is Socrates at the end who provides his own (by implication correct) philosophy of love; in Ficino, each of the speeches is taken as offering some truth about love, even Aristophanes' comic interlude on the androgyne myth, so that the whole of the *Symposium*, and not just Socrates' speech, is taken seriously. At the same time, as we have noted, some of Ficino's explanations are tinged with a Christian neo-Platonism inspired by Pseudo-Dionysius and others. The result is a work that, far from presenting a coherent view of love, offers a number of different approaches to the subject, while maintaining the Platonic ideal of a spiritual love between a man and a boy as the highest form of love.

Nevertheless, certain key notions emerged from the *De amore* and became distilled into a theory of love that informed Renaissance love poetry as well as more philosophical works.²⁴ To understand these ideas, it is useful to have in mind a notion of the neo-Platonic macrocosm, with its four principal divisions: the cosmic mind (*mens mundana*), the cosmic soul (*spiritus mundanus*), the realm of nature (*natura*), and the realm of

²⁴ J. Festugière's *La Philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1980) remains an excellent general introduction to the many different themes used in French poetry derived from Ficino.

matter (*materia*). Each part is conceived as one of a series of concentric circles, with the realm of matter at the center and the cosmic mind at the outer extreme. *Natura* corresponds to the earth, all of whose elements are made up of inert matter. The *spiritus mundanus* corresponds to the heavens, from the sphere of the moon to the fixed stars. The *mens mundana*, beyond the heavens, contains the pure essences of all things, the Platonic ideas.

We have already seen in Marguerite's poetry the image of spiritual ascent, and much of Ficinian philosophy concerning love presents it simply as a special case. Like Plato, Ficino distinguishes between two kinds of love, one heavenly, one earthly:

La premiere Venus, qui est en l'entendement [i.e. the *mens mundana*], est dicte estre née du Ciel, sans mere: pource que *mere* selon les Physiciens est matiere. Mais cest entendement n'a point de compaignée avec la matiere corporelle. La seconde Venus, laquelle est mise en l'ame du monde [the *spiritus mundanus*], est engendrée de Juppiter et Dione. De Juppiter, c'est à dire, de ceste vertu de l'âme, laquelle meut les choses celestes. Car icelle a créé ceste puissance, laquelle engendre ces inferieures. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, p. 62)

As in the *Symposium*, each type of love has two different goals: "l'une est ceste intelligence qu'avons mis en l'entendement angelique. L'autre est la puissance d'engendrer, baillée à l'ame du monde," in other words the power of comprehension and the power of procreation.

The immediate goal of lovers is the pursuit of Beauty, which can only be appreciated by the eyes, in the case of physical beauty, or the mind, in the case of spiritual beauty.²⁵ Hence, ideal love does not involve any sexual pleasure. Since perfect Beauty resides in the cosmic mind, the ultimate desire of the lover is union with the Sovereign One (God) through the agency of Heavenly Love. Common love, on the other hand, causes lovers to be tortured by *cholere* and *melancholie* so that "comme aveugles ne savent où ils vont, ne qu'ils deviennent. . . . Pour ce est ce que l'homme par ceste fureur se tourne en la nature de la beste" (La Haye, *Commentaire*, p. 175). The majority of the lovers in the *Heptaméron* are

²⁵ "Amour est ung desir d'avoir jouissance de Beaulté. Et Beaulté est quelque resplendisseur attirant à soy l'esprit humain. Veritablement la beaulté du corps autre chose n'est, que ceste resplendisseur en la bonne grace des couleurs et lignes. Et la Beaulté de l'esprit est une resplendisseur par le parement de doctrine et de meurs. . . . L'œil seul doncques ha la fruition de la beaulté du corps. . . . Davantage nous comprenons ceste resplendisseur et beaulté de l'esprit par le seul entendement. À ceste cause, cil qui desire la beaulté de l'esprit, se contente du seul regard de l'entendement" (La Haye, *Commentaire*, pp. 67–68).

subject to this form of love. With Heavenly Love, it is through the agency of the *fureurs divines* that the lover's soul can ultimately be united with the One:

L'homme par fureur divine est eslevé par dessus la nature de l'homme, et vient à estre Dieu. Or est fureur divine l'esclaircissement de l'ame naturelle, par laquelle Dieu retire l'ame cheute des choses haultes aux basses: et des choses basses la releve aux haultes. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, p. 176)

This assumes that our soul has descended into our bodies at our birth, passing from the One, through the four steps of understanding, reason, opinion, and nature, down to the body. For it to be able to return, it must pass back through these same steps by means of the divine frenzies:

Il est donques quatre especes de fureur divine. La premiere est fureur poetique: la seconde, fureur concernant les choses divines: la tierce, divination: la quarte est affection contraignant à amours. Veritablement poésie vient des Muses: Mystere, de Denis [Bacchus]: la Divination d'Appollo: et Amour, de Venus. Car l'ame ne peut retourner en ung, si elle n'est faicte ung. (La Haye, *Commentaire*, p. 177)

This summary is based on the *Phaedrus*, 244–45, and Ficino, like Plato, sees the frenzy of love as the greatest of the four. The beloved, however, while being the initiator of the frenzy of love, is inevitably left behind by the soul in its spiritual ascent.

How far can these notions be seen at work in the *Heptaméron*? *Nouvelle* 19 offers by far the most explicitly positive depiction of neo-Platonic love, in which Poline and her anonymous lover are led to spiritual enlightenment through their mutual affection. Prevented from marrying Poline by the duke and duchess of Mantua because of his lack of wealth, the young man goes off to war, is captured and released, and determines, if he cannot marry Poline, to enter a religious order. On deciding on this step, it is very explicitly *not* the religious life that he sees as a means of salvation in itself, as he explains to Poline:

non que je [ne] sçache très bien qu'en tous estatz l'homme se peut saulver, mais pour avoir plus de loisir de contempler la Bonté divine, laquelle, j'espere, aura pitié des faultes de ma jeunesse, et changera mon cueur, pour aymer autant les choses spirituelles qu'il a faict les temporelles. Et si Dieu me fait la grace de pouvoir gaingner la sienne, mon labeur sera incessamment employé à prier Dieu pour vous. Vous suppliant, par ceste amour tant ferme et loyalle qui a esté entre nous deux, avoir memoire de moy en voz oraisons et prier Nostre Seigneur, qu'il me donne autant de constance en ne vous voyant point, qu'il m'a donné de contentement en vous regardant. (*Heptaméron*, p. 145)

At this point, the young man is seen at the start of his spiritual ascent, in search of the "Bonté divine" which must be the goal of all Platonic lovers. It is significant, too, that it is the sense of sight that he highlights at the end of this quotation as having inspired him in the first place. The conclusion of the song that he writes shortly after entering the monastery, and which is seen five or six months later by Poline, spells out the neo-Platonic implications of their love:

Ainsy qu'au monde
Fut pure et monde
Nostre parfaite amitié;
Dedans le cloistre
Pourra paroistre
Plus grande de la moitié;
Car amour loyal et ferme,
Qui n'a jamais fin ne terme,
Droict au ciel nous conduira. (*Heptaméron*, p. 148)

Perfect love, "qui n'a jamais fin ne terme," will lead the two to union with the One. When they see each other again during Mass at his monastery, the effect is dramatic:

Quand Poline le veid en tel habillement où sa beaulté et grace estoient plus-tost augmentées que diminuées, fut si esmue et troublée, que, pour couvrir la cause de la couleur qui luy venoit au visaige, se print à toussyr. Et son pauvre serviteur, qui entendoit mieulx ce son-là que celluy des cloches de son monastere, n'osa tourner sa teste, mais, en passant devant elle, ne peut garder ses œilz qu'ilz ne prinssent le chemin que si longtemps ilz avoient tenu. Et, en regardant piteusement Poline, fut si saisi du feu qu'il pensoit quasi estainct, qu'en le voulant plus couvrir qu'il ne vouloit, tomba tout de son hault à terre devant elle. (*Heptaméron*, p. 149)

Again, we see the effects of beauty, this time on Poline, resulting in a physical reaction on her part, while the sight of Poline rekindles the fire of love in the young man, causing him to faint, an indication, perhaps, of the temporary departure of his soul from his body.²⁶

²⁶ Poline and her lover had also fainted at their last meeting before he entered the monastery: "La pauvre Poline . . . sans luy respondre aultre chose, luy vat gecter les bras au col, pleurant avecq une si grande vehemence, que la parolle, la voix et la force luy defaillirent, et se laissa tumber entre ses bras esvanouye: dont la pitié qu'il en eut, avecq l'amour et la tristesse, luy en feirent faire autant, tant que une de ses compaignes, les voyant tumber l'un d'un costé et l'autre de l'autre, appella du secours, qui à force de remedes les feyt revenir" (*Heptaméron*, p. 145). Indeed, a few lines further on, she is decribed as being like "ung corps sans esperit" (*ibid.*).

While the two lovers are aware of the workings on them of God, "Celluy qui est le vray, parfaict et digne d'estre nommé Amour," it is Parlamente in the ensuing discussion who spells out the more overtly neo-Platonic implications of the story:

J'appelle parfaictz amans . . . ceulx qui cherchent, en ce qu'ilz aiment, quelque perfection, soit beaulté, bonté ou bonne grace; tousjours tendans à la vertu, et qui ont le cueur si hault et si honneste, qu'ilz ne veuillent, pour mourir, mettre leur fin aux choses basses que l'honneur et la conscience repreuvent; car l'ame, qui n'est créée que pour retourner à son souverain bien, ne fait, tant qu'elle est dedans ce corps, que desirer d'y parvenir. Mais, à cause que les sens, par lesquelz elle en peut avoir nouvelles, sont obscurs et charnelz par le peché du premier pere, ne luy peuvent monstrier que les choses visibles plus approchantes de la perfection, après quoy l'ame court, cuydant trouver, en une beaulté exterieure, en une grace visible et aux vertuz morales, la souveraine beaulté, grace et vertu. Mais, quant elle les a cerchez et experimentez, et elle n'y treuve point Celluy qu'elle ayme, elle passe oultre, ainsy que l'enfant, selon sa petitesse, ayme les poupines et autres petites choses, les plus belles que son œil peult veoir, et estime richesses d'assembler des petites pierres; mais, en croissant, ayme les popines vives et amasse les biens necessaires pour la vie humaine. Mais, quant il congnoist, par plus grande experience, que ès choses territoires n'y a perfection ne felicité, desire chercher le facteur et la source d'icelles. Toutesfois, si Dieu ne luy ouvre l'œil de foy, seroit en danger de devenir, d'un ignorant, ung infidele philosophe; car foy seulement peult monstrier et faire recevoir le bien que l'homme charnel et animal ne peult entendre. (*Heptaméron*, pp. 151–52)

The terms used to describe this spiritual ascent are deliberately syncretic in nature: the lovers' souls seek the "souverain bien," but are hindered by the imprisonment of their souls in their bodies; however, their senses are corrupt as a result of original sin, "le peché du premier pere." They are led by physical beauty towards "la souveraine beaulté," but this is ultimately achieved by faith alone, *sola fides*, "car foy seulement peult monstrier et faire recevoir le bien que l'homme charnel et animal ne peult entendre." The Platonic frenzy of love, then, acts in the same way as Christian grace.

Not all stories involving "parfaicte amour" end on such a positive note, however. *Nouvelle* 9 presents the account of another virtuous but impecunious young man in love with a woman of higher wealth and station. Although his honorable conduct makes him welcome with the family, gossip drives him away for a time, and he languishes to such an extent when he hears that his beloved's family has chosen a husband for her that he is on the point of death. Daughter and mother visit him, and his final request is to kiss his beloved:

Le pauvre languissant, le plus fortement qu'il peut, estendit ses bras tous desnuez de chair et de sang, et avecq toute la force de ses os embrassa la cause de sa mort; et, en la baisant de sa froide et pasle bouche, la tint le plus longuement qu'il luy fut possible; et puis luy dist: "L'amour que je vous ay portée a esté si grande et honneste, que jamais, hors mariage, ne soubzhaictay de vous que le bien que j'en ay maintenant; par faulte duquel et avecq lequel *je rendray joyeusement mon esperit à Dieu, qui est parfaicte amour et charité*, qui congnoist la grandeur de mon amour et honnesteté de mon desir; le suppliant, ayant mon desir entre mes bras, recevoir entre les siens mon esperit." (*Heptaméron*, p. 52, my emphasis)

The kiss exchanged here may well evoke the neo-Platonic topos of the exchange of souls, while the ascent of the soul to God is again a central theme in the text. The lover dies as a result of the "vehemence" of his kiss, finally releasing his soul, and the couple remain locked in their embrace. Despite the somewhat gruesome nature of the scene, the narrator focuses on the effects of this perfect love on the young woman: "l'amour que la demoiselle avoit tousjours celée se declaira à l'heure si fort, que la mere et les serviteurs du mort eurent bien affaire à separer ceste union; mais à force osterent la vive, pire que morte, d'entre les bras du mort, lequel ils feirent honnorablement enterrer" (p. 52). Once again, love is seen as a powerful, if uncomfortable, force.

In these two cases, it has been the male lover that the story has focused on. *Nouvelle* 21 concerns Rolandine, who happily defies her negligent father and spiteful mistress out of love for a "bastard d'une grande et bonne maison," who in turn shows himself to be unworthy of her, being more inspired by ambition than love. Platonic considerations are played down in this story: beauty is not a factor, since Rolandine "ne fust des plus belles ny des laydes aussy" (p. 158) and her lover "avoit si peu de beaulté, que une dame, quelle elle fust, ne l'eust pour son plaisir choisy" (p. 159).²⁷ This lack of beauty is significant. Despite Rolandine's fidelity, despite her courage in facing the queen, her mistress, after it becomes apparent that she has been consistently defying her, there is no suggestion in this story that love truly leads to spiritual enlightenment. God's intervention in the end is far more practical and earthly, when Rolandine discovers her husband's infidelity:²⁸ "Parquoy, la Bonté divine, qui est parfaicte charité

²⁷ While the physical appearance of the lovers in *nouvelle* 19 is not commented upon, we learn in *nouvelle* 9 that the young man was "beaucoup plus riche de vertu, beaulté et honnesteté que d'autres biens" (*Heptaméron*, p. 49).

²⁸ In the course of their relationship, they had contracted a clandestine marriage (p. 162).

et vraye amour eut pitié de sa douleur et regarda sa patience, en sorte que, après peu de jours, le bastard mourut à la poursuite d'une autre femme" (p. 173). Thus, it is not every apparently perfect love that can lead to union with God, and the importance of reciprocal love, even if it comes only at the last moment, as in *nouvelle* 9, would appear to be crucial.

Conclusion

Between the spiritual poetry and the *Heptaméron*, there is a surprising degree of overlap in terms of the neo-Platonic themes that Marguerite draws on. Spiritual ascent appears to be at the heart of her thinking, so that many of the ancillary images that would later find their way into neo-Platonic love poetry—such as the beloved's gaze acting as a poison on the lover or ensnaring him as in a net—are absent from her writing. Whatever the neo-Platonic texts she may or may not have read, it seems likely that she had at least some acquaintance with Ficino's *De amore*, either direct or indirect, and that this found its way into her writing. In the end, it seems that her evangelical religious views fitted in well with the spiritual side of Platonism, an elitist view of the world in which, to quote Socrates, "the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the mystics few" (*Phaedo*, 69c). Just as, in the *Heptaméron*, the ten men and women who survive the floods in the Pyrenees from among the many who perish are a chosen social elite, those who are capable of true transcendent love, through Grace or divine *furor*, are equally exceptional. The rest are attached to earthly things through their bestial, postlapsarian nature, and will never achieve the "haulte sapience" that she had alluded to in *La Navire*, and which Ronsard sees her as enjoying in his "Hymne triumphal."

OPENING AND CLOSING REFLECTIONS:
THE *MIROIR DE L'ÂME PÉCHERESSE*
AND THE *MIROIR DE JÉSUS-CHRIST CRUCIFIÉ*

Isabelle Garnier in collaboration with Isabelle Pantin

The theologian and poet Charles de Sainte-Marthe, a direct observer of the last two years of the life of Marguerite de Navarre (into whose service he came at that time), was the first to honor her following her death on 21 December 1549 with his *Oraison funebre de l'incomparable Marguerite, royne de Navarre*, published in Paris in 1550. This prose eulogy of over 100 pages, subtitled "*Icy est le mirouer des Princesses*," was dedicated to the late queen's daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, and to her niece, Marguerite de France, the sister of Henri II. A liminary poem addressed to the latter urges her to consider the example of her aunt, also using the metaphor of the mirror:

Mirés vous donc (Niepce vertueuse)
Au mirouer de vostre Tante heureuse.¹

The mirror metaphor reappears in a marginal note to the text of the *Oraison* itself: "La Royn. de Navar. est un mirouer d'obeissance à toutes femmes" (fol. Kv). The recurrence of this image in a work celebrating Marguerite de Navarre, immediately following her demise, attests to the particular resonance of the mirror motif in relation to the queen's literary renown and its aptness for underscoring a major quality in an author who sought to make her life a mirror of divine love.

In the same year, 1550, another memorial volume in praise of Marguerite recalled the *Miroir* in one of the 104 Latin distichs composed in England by the three Seymour sisters, Anne, Margaret, and Jane, whose tutor was Nicolas Denisot:

Quis speculum illius non admirabitur, in quo
Vera DEI effigies illa refracta datur?²

¹ *Oraison funebre de l'incomparable Marguerite, royne de Navarre, Duchesse d'Alençon. Composé en latin par Charles de Sainte-Marthe: Et traduite par luy, en langue françoise. Plus, Epitaphes de ladicte Dame: par aulcuns Poetes François. Icy est le mirouer des Princesses* (Paris, 1550), fol. Avr.

² *Annae, Margaritae, Janae, Sororum virginum, heroidum Anglarum, In mortem Divae Margaritae Valesiae, Navarrorum Reginae, Hecatodistichon* (Paris, 1550), distich Marg. 86.

A year later, Denisot and the young poets of the Pléiade, in their French translation of the couplets, repeated the compliment, further drawing attention to Marguerite's work with the same small capitals as used for the name of God, of whom it was said to offer "la vraie image":

Qui n'admire son MIROIR
 Qui rend toute ame assurée,
 De son DIEU luy faisant voir
 L'image reverberée? (Du Bellay)

Qui est celui qui n'admire
 Son MIROIR, où en tout lieu
 La vraie image de DIEU
 Imprimée se remire? (Denisot)³

For the contemporary reader no doubt was possible: the reference was to the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (henceforth *MAP*), the only mirror poem published at this point in time.⁴ The *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié* (*MJCC*), also known as the *Mirouer de la croix*,⁵ was among the queen's manuscripts and would be published posthumously for the first time in 1552. The *MAP* is the only text of Marguerite's monumental œuvre to be explicitly named in this funeral tribute, confirming its emblematic status, from the 16th century on, as the capstone of her poetic output.⁶ The *MAP* can be said to stand as a major work in European literary history for three reasons. First, it is one of the earliest religious works written in the vernacular, independent of the conservative theological thought in Latin, dominant at the beginning of the 16th century, and intended to offer spiritual nourishment to the community of French Evangelicals. Second, as a long poetic meditation, it prepares the way for later Christian lyric poetry and the important place this accords to first-person expression (*je*). Third, it was the first of Marguerite's works to be printed, making the king's sister, in 1531, the first woman in France to be published during her lifetime and the *MAP* the first major text written by a woman to be frequently reedited, and thus available to a broad public beyond the court circles in which

³ *Le Tombeau de Marguerite de Valois Royne de Navarre. Faict premièrement en Distiques Latins par les trois Sœurs Princesses en Angleterre. Depuis traduitz en Grec, Italien, et François par plusieurs des excellentz Poètes de la France* (Paris, 1551), fol. Giiv.

⁴ An English translation of the *MAP* had also been prepared by the future Queen Elizabeth I, see below.

⁵ The variant title suggests that the poem's genre was privileged over a precise description of its content. This was probably due equally to the fame of the first *Miroir* as to the specular nature of the second one.

⁶ While there is a reference to the "Agneau divin," no specific allusion is made to Marguerite's *Triomphe de l'Agneau*.

works circulated in manuscript.⁷ The fact that Marguerite's last major poetic composition also bears the generic title *Miroir* invites us to consider the two works together. How should we interpret the fact that at the beginning and at the end of the prolific literary output of the protector of the evangelical movement in France there stands a "mirror" poem?

In critical studies of these works, the *miroir* of the titles has been a central consideration; some analyses even seem to give it greater weight than the poems' content, as they search for traces of the specular metaphor. According to Saint Augustine, who also described the soul as a mirror, the Christian function of the mirror is twofold: on the one hand, it reflects back to man the image of himself as a sinful creature; on the other hand, it reveals to him the image of man as the divine plan intended, that is, the image of Christ.⁸ A comparison of the titles of Marguerite's poems from this Augustinian perspective might suggest that the *MAP* addresses the first function whereas the *MJCC* fulfills the second. As an examination of the texts will show, however, things are not so simple and the two functions apply equally in both poems. If we follow Robert Cottrell in seeing the capital letter O decorating the first line of the *MAP* as "a particularly powerful *figura*, for it reinforces graphically the organizing metaphor of the text" (*Grammar of Silence*, p. 101), the mirror theme is nonetheless exploited very discretely, and the word itself and its derivatives are not found in the poem—unlike the *MJCC*. The key verb in the *MAP* is *voir*, generally employed in negative phrases to signal man's powerlessness. From the first lines of the poem, this verb expresses the blindness caused by sin:

Où est l'enfer remply entierement
De tout malheur, travail, peine, et tourment?
Où est le puitz de malediction,
D'où sans fin sort desesperation?
Est il de mal nul si profond abisme
Qui suffisant fust pour punir la disme
De mes pechéz? qui sont en si grand nombre,
Qu'infinité rend si obscure l'ombre
Que les compter, *ne bien veoir, je ne puis.*⁹

⁷ The *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, for example, is known to have circulated widely in manuscript before its publication in the second edition of the *Miroir* in 1533.

⁸ See Robert D. Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry* (Washington, D.C., 1986) and Einar Mar Jonsson, *Le miroir: Naissance d'un genre littéraire* (Paris, 1999), pp. 146–49.

⁹ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, ed. Renja Salminen (Helsinki, 1979), vv. 1–9. All subsequent quotations, indicating line numbers, will be taken from this edition. Here and throughout, all italics have been added.

The same expression is repeated symmetrically to underscore the incommensurable nature of God's gift:¹⁰

Quand je pense, qui est l'occasion
Dont vous m'ayméz, *riens que dilection*
Je n'y puis veoir . . . (vv. 157–59)

The verb *voir* also alludes to another use of the specular metaphor, recalling Saint Paul's reference to indirect vision, vision by means of enigmatic images to be deciphered (1 Cor. 13:12). Mirroring the apostle's teaching, the *MAP* calls for a direct contemplation, face to face, of the divine mystery, a contemplation made possible only by the grace of God:

Parquoy venéz o bienheureux saint Pol,
.....
Tirant noz cueurs, nostre amour et espoir
À desyrer, *ce qui ne se poeut veoir*. (vv. 1382 and 1409–10)

On the other hand, the *MJCC* makes the metaphor of the mirror substantial with the text in which we find five instances of the word *mirouer*: "De toy l'exemple en ce miroer voy."¹¹ The call to contemplation in God's mirror is repeated as in a litany and Marguerite exploits the incantatory potential of anaphora:

qu'est ce de moy si bien en toy me *mire*,
l'homme perdu, le dampné, l'enfant d'ire (vv. 119–20)

[O mon] orgueil, *mire* toy dans ce chief,
[et] t'y *remire* encores de rechief! (vv. 123–24)

mire toy bien et voy ta gormandise,
ta superflue et doulce friandise,
mire toy bien en ceste bouche nette (vv. 327–29)

Mire toy bien, corps plain de pouriture (v. 853)

Mire toy bien en ce cueur amoureux,
et plus le tien ne sera rigoureux (vv. 1168–69).¹²

Despite their titles, which refer to the same genre, much appreciated in medieval and Renaissance literature (and to which we shall return below),

¹⁰ Cf. also vv. 853–56.

¹¹ They are found notably at the start and the conclusion of the poem, vv. 2, 309 (quoted here), 1025, 1147, and 1240.

¹² Marguerite de Navarre, *Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié*, ed. Lucia Fontanella (Alesandria, 1984). All subsequent quotations, indicating line numbers, are taken from this edition. Occasional alterations of spelling are made to facilitate comprehension.

Marguerite's two mirror texts are clearly different, both in their content and in their publishing history. For this reason we will consider each individually in terms of its genesis and structure before engaging in a comparative analysis. Drawing on recent scholarship, we will investigate the particular status of both works, seek to evaluate their sources, and examine the ways in which they combine personal metaphysical meditation and militant evangelical propaganda. We shall see that the first *Miroir*, after a long period of disdain despite being reedited 13 times in the 16th century, has benefited from the renewal of scholarly interest in Marguerite; we shall also see why the second, posthumous poem has had less success both with its Renaissance contemporaries and with modern critics.

The Mirror as a Medieval and Renaissance Genre

The place of Marguerite's two *Miroirs* in a long medieval tradition is signaled not only by their titles but also by their choice of devotional posture: the soul steeped in penitence in the first case, the contemplation of the cross in the second.¹³ *Miroir* is a common title for medieval and Renaissance works of piety, both in Latin and in French.¹⁴ The noun *miroir* is derived from the verb *mirer*, which in turn comes from the Latin *mirari*, to be astonished or surprised or to contemplate with surprise or wonder. Beginning in the early 12th century, *miroir* was used to designate the object in which one can look at oneself, and quickly took on the figurative sense of model or ideal representation.¹⁵ In this way, like the Latin *speculum*, it appears in the titles of didactic works forming a tripartite literary tradition: the mirror of Princes,¹⁶ the encyclopedic mirror,¹⁷ and the mirror of devotion. Works of the third kind, whose aim was moral and

¹³ On the influence of the theme of the crucified Christ on Marguerite, via Venetian editions of late Christian poems, see Charles Béné, "Tradition et nouveauté dans la poésie de Marguerite de Navarre," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis (Folia Literaria)* 38 (1997), 53–65.

¹⁴ See Jonsson, *Le miroir*, esp. pp. 6off.; cf. MAP, ed. Salminen, p. 215, and Cottrell, *Grammar*.

¹⁵ See *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris, 1995), 2:1251.

¹⁶ See Jean-Pierre Bordier, "Speculum, genre littéraire," *Dictionnaire du Moyen Age. Littérature et philosophie*, Encyclopedia Universalis (Paris, 1999). The oldest Western examples of the genre, without as yet the word mirror in their titles, are the Mirrors of Princes with which the Carolingian Church sought to educate nobles.

¹⁷ The mirror genre includes texts whose aim is to summarize all human knowledge, like Vincent of Beauvais's 13th-century *Speculum Majus*, written in three parts for the sons of Saint Louis and printed around 1460.

theological edification, owed their success, from the 12th century onward, to a passage in which Saint Augustine, expounding on the first chapter of the Epistle of Saint James, explains that Holy Scripture offers each person a reflection of his or her image.¹⁸ The metaphor spread following the imposition by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) of the obligation of annual confession, leading each believer to a regular examination of his or her conscience. Marguerite's *MAP*, at one and the same time a mirror of Scripture and a mirror of sin, inherits doubly the dynamics underlying the development of this literary genre. While it would be impossible to do justice in a short summary to the range and variety of mirrors of devotion, the *Mirouer des Pécheurs*, a high point of the genre, is of particular note. This work, based on the pseudo-Augustinian *Speculum peccatoris*, was frequently translated into French in the 15th century and printed in the 16th. A meditation on death and the misery of the human condition, an *ars moriendi* more by virtue of its content than its form, the work's characteristics foreshadow the evolution of medieval piety. To a certain extent, one can say that it prefigures the works of the following century discussed here: the *MAP*, with its frequent biblical quotations and *exempla* taken from the Old Testament or the hagiographical tradition; the *MJCC* with its focus on the preparation for death. The latter poem, however, is closer to meditations on the life of Christ, on the nature of human sin, and on mystical life, like the late 13th-century *Miroir des vierges* (*Speculum virginum*) by Marguerite d'Oingt or the *Miroir des simples âmes anéanties & qui seulement demeurent en vouloir & désir d'amour* by Marguerite Porete, a work the queen of Navarre admired.¹⁹ Between 1531 and 1552, the dates of publication of Marguerite's two "mirrors," the genre also took hold among Reformed writers: *Les quatorze miroirs pour consoler la créature en Dieu*, published without indication of date or place, came from the Genevan printing house of Jean Girard in 1543. As mirror texts multiplied, the term came to designate any didactic work in general, taking it away from the particular aim of the cultivation of the soul implicit in the genre's origins.

¹⁸ Bordier, "Speculum," p. 766.

¹⁹ See Jean Dagens, "Le *Miroir des simples âmes* et Marguerite de Navarre," in *La Mystique rhénane*, Travaux du Centre des études supérieures spécialisé d'histoire des religions de Strasbourg (Paris, 1963), pp. 281–89.

I. Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse

16th-Century Editions of the Text

The precise date at which the first *Miroir* was composed remains unknown. If there is nothing in the text itself on which to base a hypothesis, careful attention to its versification nonetheless reveals that it must have been written before June 1530.²⁰ *Le miroir de l'ame pecheresse, ouquel elle recongnoist ses fautes et pechez, aussi les graces et benefices à elle faictz par Jesu-christ son espoux*²¹ appeared anonymously from the presses of Simon Du Bois in Alençon in 1531.²² It was accompanied by two shorter poems by Marguerite, the *Discord estant en l'homme par la contrariete de l'esperit et de la chair* and the *Oraison à Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ*, as well as by two prose prayers translated from the work of the German pedagogue and musician Sebald Heyden. A single sentence on the title page alludes to the parable of the pearl in the Gospel of Matthew (13:45–46): “*La Marguerite tresnoble et precieuse, s'est preposée à ceulx qui de bon cueur la cerchoyent.*” It does not, however, offer an exact quotation from the Scriptures, as is often the case on the title page of evangelical works. The “marguerite précieuse” is also a veiled reference to the anonymous author, whom her spiritual director, Guillaume Briçonnet, called to be a “vraie perle et marguerite, par charité et amour vraiment unie avec la . . . vraie marguerite, le doulx Jesus.”²³ Du Bois issued a second edition of the *Miroir* in 1533, now preceded by a previously unpublished work, the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne, entre tresnoble et excellente princesse madame Marguerite . . . Et L'ame sainte de defuncte madame Charlotte de France, . . . niepce de ladite dame Royne*. This long evangelical poem, written after the death

²⁰ The extensive use of lyrical cesurae suggests a *terminus ad quem* for the poem's composition since Marguerite avoided them after June 1530. See Jean Vignes, review of Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, vol. 8, *Chrétiens et mondains, poèmes épars*, ed. Richard Cooper (Paris, 2007), *L'Information littéraire* no 4 (2008), 51–52.

²¹ The two occurrences of the pronoun *elle* in the title refer not to the female author but to the *âme pécheresse*. The text was published anonymously.

²² Between 9 April 1531 and 31 March 1532 to be precise. See William Kemp, “Marguerite de Navarre, Clément Marot, and the Augereau Editions of the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (Paris, 1533),” *Journal of the Early Book Society* 2 (1999), 113–56. After having left Paris to avoid censure, the printer took refuge in territory controlled by Marguerite.

²³ Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79), 1:60. Marguerite was often referred to at court by the metaphor of the *marguerite*, meaning pearl or daisy.

of François I's daughter, on 8 September 1524, identifies clearly the author of the work that appeared in a troubled year of uprisings in Paris, the desecration of statues in Alençon, and the appearance of a play satirizing Marguerite herself.²⁴ This edition of the *Miroir* also contains several other texts, including Clément Marot's translation of psalm 6, recently published in pamphlet form in Lyon. In this unsettled context, the *MAP* was issued for a second time in 1533, with the same content and title but omitting the liminary sentence "*La Marguerite . . .*," again without indication of date or place of publication.²⁵ Lacking the legally required printer's name, the *Miroir* was condemned by the Sorbonne. The following table, in which each edition is indicated by the letters A, B, C, now in common use among scholars, allows their comparison.

A 1531 Alençon, Simon Du Bois " <i>La Marguerite tresnoble . . .</i> "	<i>Miroir de l'ame pecherresse . . . Discord estant en l'homme . . . Two prose Oraisons (Heyden) Oraison à nostre seigneur JC</i>	Marginal scriptural references with biblical quotations (<i>Miroir</i> , <i>Discord</i>). The <i>Miroir</i> is missing seven lines.
B 1533 Alençon, Simon Du Bois " <i>La Marguerite tresnoble . . .</i> "	<i>Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne Miroir Discord Oraison à NSJC Two prose Oraisons</i>	Marginal scriptural references without biblical quotations. Lines 402–04 have been added.
C No date or place of publication. [1533, Paris, Augereau]	<i>Miroir Discord Oraison à NSJC Two prose Oraisons</i>	Marginal scriptural references with biblical quotations First complete corrected edition of the <i>MAP</i> .

²⁴ See Bernard Roussel, "Marguerite de Navarre, les débuts de la Réforme et les troubles à Alençon, 1530–1534," *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Archéologique de l'Orne* 105.4 (1986), 30–34.

²⁵ For details and the dating of this edition, see Pierre Jourda, "Tableau chronologique des publications de Marguerite de Navarre," *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 12 (1925), 209–55 (pp. 213–14).

The king had the censorship of his sister's work lifted; it had been printed, as was known by members of his entourage, in the workshop of Antoine Augereau. A majority of theologians, including the king's own confessor, stated that they found nothing heretical in the work.²⁶ Following the legal proceedings against the *MAP* between 24 October and 8 November 1533, Augereau published two more editions in the same year, attributed to Marguerite and with a title giving the mirror metaphor a new resonance: *Le Miroir de treschrestienne Princesse Marguerite de France, Royne de Navarre, Duchesse D'alençon & de Berry auquel elle voit son neant et son tout*. This title was adopted by all subsequent separate editions of the *Miroir*:

D	<i>Miroir</i>	
1533	<i>Discord</i>	
Paris, Augereau	<i>Oraison à NSJC</i>	
	Two prose <i>Oraisons</i>	
	<i>Le VI pseaulme de David</i> (Marot)	
E	1st part:	Printer's
1533	"Marguerite . . . au Lecteur"	introduction. Text
Marguerite de Navarre	<i>Miroir</i>	revised in line
Paris, Augereau	<i>Discord</i>	with the queen's
	<i>Oraison à NSJC</i> (vers)	manuscript.
	Two prose <i>Oraisons</i> reworked	
	<i>Le VI pseaulme de David</i> (Marot)	
	2nd part:	
	<i>Epistre familiere de prier Dieu</i>	
	<i>Aultre epistre familiere d'aimer</i>	
	<i>Chrestiennement</i>	
	<i>Briefve doctrine pour deuement</i>	
	<i>escripre selon la propriété du</i>	
	<i>languaige François</i>	
	<i>L'Instruction et Foy d'ung Chrestien,</i>	
	<i>mises en François par Clément</i>	
	<i>Marot</i>	
F	Reprint of the first part of E.	
Marguerite de Navarre		
[1533, Paris ?]		

²⁶ See Salminen, ed. *MAP*, pp. 21–30, and Kemp, "Marguerite."

Two other printers reissued Augereau's last edition: Le Prince (Lyon, 1538) and Jean Girard (Geneva, 1539), bringing to eight the number of editions before the poem's 1547 publication, under its original title, in the complete works of the queen by Jean de Tournes, *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*.

Marguerite's First Miroir: A Key Text of the "Navarrian Network"

The first publication of the *Miroir* in 1531 was a militant act. It placed the poem in a line of literary works marking a break with established religious ideology, less in terms of its title, as we have seen, than by the circumstances surrounding its publication. Since the early 1520s, more and more Christians had affirmed the need to put the gospel at the center of the life of faith. The Faculty of Theology considered all those who sought to grant each believer free and personal access to the Word in his or her native language to be heretics. Historians have given them the name Evangelicals. Such people, representing a range of theological tendencies, were to be found all over Europe. French Evangelism (a word that was not in use in the 16th century) was at once careful, active, and coherent. It emerged under Marguerite's protection, as the king's sister headed a group of innovators forming, to use the term proposed by Jonathan Reid, the "Navarrian network."²⁷ The mission of this network was to make available catechetical and didactic texts that would supplement the translation of the Bible by Lefèvre d'Étaples (the New Testament in 1523; the whole Bible in 1530) and thus to promote an internalized practice of the faith. The movement was particularly active between the king's return from imprisonment in Spain (1526), then that of his sons left behind as hostages (1530), and the *affaire des placards* (17 October 1534). The publications emerging from the network, often inspired by or in some cases direct translations of Luther, did not avoid censure. Several imprints from the presses of Du Bois, the printer of the first edition of the *Miroir*, were condemned in 1531: *L'Oraison de Jesus Christ*, *L'Epistre chrestienne tresutile*, and *Le Brief Recueil de la substance et principal fondement de la doctrine evangelique*. According to Jonathan Reid, "by the early 1530s, the faculty and many others were now convinced that it was Marguerite who was fostering the plague of

²⁷ Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, 2009), 1:35. Marguerite "shows signs of having been an active leader in a broad network of evangelicals working for the religious renewal of France" (1:3).

Lutheran heresy afflicting the land" (*King's Sister*, 1:39). As she decided to publish her first poem, the queen, who until then had favored the circulation of her works in manuscript form, might have chosen its unremarkable title on the advice of the printer. As Gabrielle Berthoud has shown, the Evangelicals commonly had recourse to titles that appeared orthodox in an attempt to avoid censure.²⁸ The *Miroir* might be seen as part of this trend in its appeal to a common genre of religious literature, despite the absence of any specific use of the mirror figure in the text. In addition, a work with a similarly unremarkable title, *Le Mirouer d'or de l'ame pecheresse tresutile et profitable*, translated from the 15th-century Latin of Denis the Carthusian, enjoyed several editions beginning in 1484, and the doctors of the Faculty of Theology, keen on the *speculum* as a genre,²⁹ themselves oversaw an edition of the *Mirouer d'or de l'ame pecheresse* in Paris in 1532.³⁰ The appearance of this edition between the first two editions of Marguerite's *Miroir* might even suggest it was intended to counter the Evangelicals' attack.

The *MAP* was thus launched onto the book market alongside other evangelical works as the battle against the conservatives was in full swing. As Reid notes, beginning in the 1530s and continuing on into the 1540s, "Marguerite and a host of fellow writers became a vibrant, public voice of evangelical doctrine and renewal" (*King's Sister*, 1:15). The *Miroir* contains, more or less explicitly, the entire range of doctrinal ideas promoted by the Evangelicals, arising from a reconsideration of Saint Paul, especially the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, which stress the opposition of faith and law, the superiority of faith over works, justification by faith, and salvation by the grace of God and by union with the Risen Christ. If these ideas have much in common with Reformed theology, the Evangelicals differentiated themselves from Luther and later from Calvin by being less radical in their rejection of the fundamental practices of the Roman liturgy and much more prudent in their statement of innovative elements.³¹

²⁸ Gabrielle Berthoud, "Livres pseudo-catholiques de contenu protestant," in *Aspects de la propagande religieuse*, ed. Gabrielle Berthoud et al. (Geneva, 1957), pp. 143–54.

²⁹ *La Farce des Théologastres*, attributed to Louis de Berquin, makes fun of the "grand Miroer / Des Theologastres"; see ed. Claude Longeon (Geneva, 1989), ll. 541–42.

³⁰ See Francis Higman, *Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French, 1511–1551* (Aldershot and Burlington, Vt., 1996), p. 322.

³¹ See Isabelle Garnier-Mathez, "Influence et connivence luthériennes chez les Évangéliques sous François I^{er}: une innutrition communautaire," in *La Littérature française au croisement des cultures*, ADIREL, Actes du colloque de mars 2008 (Travaux de Littérature) 22 (Paris, 2009), pp. 127–38.

The *MAP*, like other texts produced by the network, remains silent on such highly contested issues as the role and conduct of the pope, the clergy and monks, the intercession of the saints, purgatory, or the doctrine of the Eucharist.³² This was not its design. On the other hand, the poem does adopt a clear position on the doctrine of justification by faith, “le thème central, sinon le thème unique” of the poem (ed. Salminen, p. 76), and one which “links the theology of the *Miroir* with that of the *Dialogue*.”³³ The *Miroir* forcefully and effectively deploys evangelical theology in a completely original way not found in other texts of the network. The long first-person verse meditation, which calls for a personal commitment on the part of the sinner, stands in marked contrast to the prose catechetical treatises that frequently proffer vigorous admonition.

The Rediscovery of the Miroir de l'âme pécheresse and Recent Scholarship

After three and half centuries of neglect, Félix Frank's 1873 edition of *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*,³⁴ followed by the studies of Pierre Jourda, once again drew attention to Marguerite's poetic works. The *MAP* has received several critical editions: the *editio princeps* (A) was presented by Joseph L. Allaire;³⁵ the text in its most polished form (E), edited by Renja Salminen in Finland, has attracted less interest than it deserves, despite an extensive critical apparatus.³⁶ After considering the poem's historical and religious context, Salminen studies its versification and use of language. In addition to a glossary, an appendix gives the text of *The Glasse of the Synnefull Soule* (1544), the English translation of the *Miroir* by the future Elizabeth I and a testimony to the poem's reception at the English court.³⁷

³² Only two lines of the *Miroir* make a discrete reference to “la reception / De vostre corps tresdigne et sacré sang” (vv. 126–27); cf. the second *Miroir*: “noz ames repais / de ta doctrine et de ton pain tresblanc / par qui mangeons et ta chair et ton sang” (vv. 802–04).

³³ Paula Sommers, *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry of Spiritual Ascent* (Geneva, 1989), p. 51.

³⁴ 4 vols. (Paris, 1873); repr. 1 vol. (Geneva, 1970).

³⁵ (Munich, 1972).

³⁶ Most Anglophone scholars have used Frank's edition, that is, the late text originally printed in 1547. An edition of the *Miroir* and the texts that accompanied it in edition E is in preparation by Isabelle Garnier, Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, vol. 2.

³⁷ Of the 19 publications produced by the presses of Du Bois in Alençon, 12, including *Le Dialogue* and *Le Miroir*, were included in the library of Henry VIII, providing further evidence of the spirit of propaganda shared by Du Bois and the queen's work. See James P.

If Salminen terms the *MAP* a “*prière jaillie directement du cœur*” (p. 82), the editor also identifies its four principal sources: (1) the Bible, the poem consisting essentially of “une suite de citations bibliques versifiées” (p. 31); (2) the correspondence between Marguerite and Guillaume Briçonnet, to which can be traced the idea of the union of the freed and purified spirit with God, the exploitation of the metaphysical significance of vision, and the use of terms found in the *Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius; (3) the propagandist works published by Du Bois, such as the *Traicté du Souverain Bien*, dedicated to Marguerite; (4) Luther, and in particular his *De Libertate christiana*.³⁸ There is a general consensus among scholars with respect to these sources, which are above all evidence of Marguerite’s biblical and evangelical inspiration, even if some have rejected a number of Salminen’s overly hasty conclusions.³⁹ The *MAP* was printed with marginal notes giving references to the Scripture passages commented on by the queen or cited from memory, though their precise content and number vary from edition to edition. This characteristic, which distinguishes the *MAP* from medieval devotional works as well as from contemporary ones, is found only one other time in Marguerite’s corpus: the *Discord*, published with the *Miroir* from 1533 on. In her article “Les Annotations en marge du *Miroir de l’ame pecheresse*,” Cynthia Skenazi stresses the central role of the Bible among the poem’s sources: “l’Écriture est simultanément la source de l’œuvre de Marguerite, son référent ultime et son point d’aboutissement,”⁴⁰ a sign of the poem’s fundamentally didactic intention. We shall see later that the *MJCC* also contains marginal biblical references but in this case, since they are not found in the manuscripts, they appear to have been added by the editors and, in consequence, vary in accordance with their particular theological leanings.

The considerable work performed by the editors of the second, post-humous mirror, has been exploited by modern scholars to enrich our understanding of the first. Gary Ferguson, for example, draws on a treatise

Carley, “French Evangelical Books at the Court of Henry VIII,” in *The French Evangelical Book before Calvin*, ed. J.-F. Gilmont and W. Kemp (Nugae Humanisticae) 4 (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 131–45.

³⁸ Salminen speaks of Luther’s work without seeming to be aware of the anonymous French translation that was circulating within the “Navarrian network”: *Le Livre tresutile de la vraye et parfaite subjection des chrestiens, et ensemble de la sacree franchise et liberté, qu’ilz ont en Saint Esperit* ([Strasbourg], [Johann Schott], [Wolfgang Köpfel], 1525?).

³⁹ Marguerite “ne comprit jamais pleinement l’envergure du Protestantisme naissant,” ed. *MAP*, p. 70.

⁴⁰ *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 55 (1993), 255–70 (p. 257).

written by the Dominican Pierre Olivier, *Le Mirouer du Chrestien et moyen de cognoistre Dieu et soimesme*, destined to be printed alongside the *MJCC*, to show that the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* was clearly intended to have "a certain exemplary and paradigmatic status."⁴¹ Ferguson argues that the traditional understanding of the *MAP* as purely personal had led to an underestimation of its complexity and artistic merit, focusing attention on the presence of a first-person speaker, *je*, uncritically assimilated to the author-Marguerite. According to Ferguson, Olivier's introduction to Marguerite's work, in addition to being a historical reflection, contains an appreciation of the poem as a mirror, showing "a sensitivity to the generic characteristics of Marguerite's poem, which remains illuminating for the modern reader, who does not necessarily share the same theological concerns" (p. 404). Ferguson applies Olivier's guidelines to the first 168 lines of the *MAP*, demonstrating that "three distinct spiritual states are described and come to coalesce in a single predicated subject *je*" (p. 408). A first *je* arises from the coalescence of "imaginary associations between the poem's individual *âme pecheresse* and natural man in his fallen state," making the subject of the poem "both personal and universal." The fact that man appears here "more radically fallen" than in traditional theology is taken by Ferguson as a reflection of the influence on the queen of "the rhetoric of mystical writing, as well as of Protestant writers such as Luther" (pp. 405–06). Assuming the reader must understand that this *je* speaks of his or her fallen state with a hindsight "guaranteed only outside the text by the authorial soul of Marguerite, looking at herself in the mirror," Ferguson points to the existence of a second *je*, "coexistent with the first in the poem, yet logically posterior to it." In a last step, "as it contemplates Christ, by whose grace it is restored, the soul is eventually transformed into a third *je*, who recovers in Christ, all that of which up until now it had been deprived"—a transformation corresponding to Olivier's mirror of grace (pp. 405–07). Thus Ferguson accords the pronoun *je* "the possibility of a privileged relationship with its author," but a relationship that is "both poetically and theologically, self-conscious" (pp. 408–11).

If the particular relationship uniting the speaking *je* to Marguerite gives shape to the meditation of the *MAP*, the sinful soul nonetheless remains a common motif of medieval piety, whose precise sources Brenda Dunn-Lardeau has worked to identify. Of particular importance is the model of

⁴¹ Gary Ferguson, "Now in a glass darkly: the textual status of the *je parlant* in the *Miroirs* of Marguerite de Navarre," *Renaissance Studies* 5.4 (1991), 398–411 (p. 399).

the great sinner repentant, taken from the Bible, as well as the historical lives of female sinners and penitents (Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt) and the apocryphal lives of Pelagia, Margaret, and Thaïs found in Jacobus de Voragine's 13th-century *Golden Legend*, a copy of which was in the library of the château at Cognac where Marguerite spent her childhood. As Dunn-Lardeau notes, "la figure hagiographique de la pécheresse et de la pénitente . . . est l'étymon spirituel du *Miroir* pour reprendre une expression spitzérienne."⁴² The work of biblical exegesis integrated into the prayer-meditation of the sinful soul also has medieval sources, as Barbara Marczuk-Szwed has shown.⁴³ Marguerite, committed to the interpretation of Scripture, was familiar with the three traditional levels of spiritual meaning: the allegorical, the moral (or tropological), and the anagogical (or mystical), which supplemented the literal sense conveying historical facts.⁴⁴ Evangelical theologians like Lefèvre d'Étaples and Briçonnet had taught her to seek out the true sense of the Scriptures, communicated to those enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, Marguerite's position is not that of a theologian. The sinful soul identifies with a number of biblical figures, who "racontent eux-mêmes leur propre biographie. Ils expliquent le sens moral de leurs histoires et finissent cette exégèse originale par une prière affectueuse et personnelle" (Marczuk-Szwed, p. 41). Moral exegesis, as practiced by the queen, leads to an understanding of the profound meaning of the lives of the saints at the same time that it allows the Christian to understand his or her own situation and to see "sa biographie tourmentée inscrite dans l'histoire du salut et dans le plan divin." Demonstrating a degree of "indépendance à l'égard de la tradition et de l'enseignement de Briçonnet," Marguerite "étend la signification

⁴² Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, "Archaïsme et modernité de la figure de la pécheresse et de la pénitente dans le *Miroir de l'ame pecheresse* de Marguerite de Navarre," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis* (Folia Literaria) 38 (1997), 21–33 (pp. 32–33). Dunn-Lardeau points out resemblances between Marguerite and her models: like Pelagia, "appelée Marguerite (perle) à cause de la pompe de ses vêtements . . . , Marguerite aurait trop aimé son corps, mais cet aveu ne survient que dans le second *Miroir* puisque le premier est tout à clamer l'aversion de la chair" (pp. 30–31).

⁴³ Barbara Marczuk-Szwed, "Marguerite de Navarre à la recherche du sens spirituel de la Bible," *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* 33 (1991), 31–42.

⁴⁴ According to a couplet quoted by and sometimes attributed to Nicholas of Lyra: "Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria / Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia." The object of the allegorical sense is Christ and the Church, the history of Israel prefiguring the earthly life of the Messiah. The moral or tropological sense reveals what the Christian should or should not do. The anagogical or eschatological sense reveals his or her final goal. See Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959–64).

tropologique des histoires bibliques aux tourments spirituels” suffered by her characters (pp. 35–37). With respect to the mystical meaning of Scripture, Marguerite is influenced by two theological traditions: the Fathers lead her to seek in biblical narratives symbols of the mysteries of salvation; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite encourages her to see in them a description of the mystical union of the soul with God. The originality of Marguerite’s biblical commentaries is a result of her use of the Scriptures “à titre d’argument à l’appui du raisonnement, ou comme illustration d’un thème qui parfois ne s’apparente que de loin à l’Écriture.” This “exégèse poétique” (pp. 41–42), which fits itself to the requirements of verse composition, testifies to the queen’s theological knowledge but also, as we shall see, to the aim of her work.

Alongside the religious sources there are also specific literary influences. Marie Holban compares the *MAP* to a collection of epistles in both prose and verse by the rhétoricien Jean Bouchet, *Les Triumphe de la Noble Dame et l’art de honnestement aymer* (Poitiers, 1530/1531).⁴⁵ This volume, dedicated to the new queen Éléonore, would meet with considerable success, being reprinted, according to Holban, some 18 times. Like the *Miroir*, it uses the enunciative fiction of giving voice to a soul confessing its guilt. Among the many similarities highlighted between the two texts, some are so specific as to give weight to the thesis that one must have influenced the other. At the same time, it is uncertain that the *Triumphe* were composed earlier and Bouchet might well have read the *Miroir* in manuscript. As a result, Holban overstates her case when she claims that the work of Bouchet contains “l’idée et la raison d’être” of the *MAP*. If Bouchet’s influence on Marguerite were in fact established, this would require holding the date of the *Miroir*’s composition back to the very end of the period 1527–30, where current scholarship situates it, and accepting that the poem “fut écrit rapidement, d’un seul jet.” Such a hypothesis seems unlikely in light of the poem’s elaborate composition, to which we now turn.

The Structure of the Miroir de l’âme pécheresse: A Challenge to Scholarship

Competing analyses

Most of the 20th-century commentators on the *MAP*, seeing the poem as representing a lyrical outpouring of the author’s soul, her hopes, her fears,

⁴⁵ Marie Holban, “Le *Miroir de l’âme pécheresse* et les *Epistres de la noble et amoureuse dame*,” in *Mélanges Abel Lefranc* (Paris, 1936; Geneva, 1972), pp. 142–54.

and her prayers, felt compelled to criticize its form. The poem's subject seemed to be treated in a disorganized way, leading to disorder and confusion. Its style struck them as heavy, weighed down by repetition and worn-out images, its versification undisciplined, far removed from classical norms:

C'est moins un poème qu'une longue effusion, une confession, où de beaux traits épars ne suffisent pas à compenser des longueurs et un bavardage parfois pénible à suivre.⁴⁶

La première chose qui frappe le lecteur du *Miroir* est l'abandon d'un plan logique. Le poème est confus; Marguerite se laisse aller, elle écrit page après page et pourtant la pensée n'avance pas.⁴⁷

The poem's lack of immediately apparent structure, long identified as the cause of its relative neglect by scholars, no longer seems to deter readers today. In recent decades, several studies, most of them in English, have addressed the seeming "confusion" of the *Miroir*, drawing out its internal logic and highlighting its structural dynamics. Robert Cottrell's *Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry* (1986) was the first to open a new approach to the poetic work of the queen. Often marked by the influence of psychoanalysis, whose conceptual framework was not developed with such an object of study in mind, this analysis of the *Miroir* turned out to be extremely stimulating and represents one of the most successful attempts at explaining the work's spiritual and poetic coherence. The *Miroir*'s epigraph is taken from psalm 51[/50]: "Seigneur DIEU crée en moy cœur net," a prayer of repentance known as the *Miserere*. Cottrell takes this to indicate that the poem "retraces the pattern of spiritual progress outlined in the *Miserere*, which thus serves as a paradigmatic text" (p. 99). The *Miroir* appears as a long meditation of 1434 lines, based on Scripture: "Looking into the *speculum Scripturae*, which is immanent in her own text, Marguerite sees in the image of herself that is reflected back a sinner" (p. 106). Based on a close examination of Marguerite's correspondence with Briçonnet, Cottrell elucidates the main lines of a mystical spirituality based on Pseudo-Dionysius's negative theology, the wellspring of the queen's poetic search for a language capable of signifying divine Silence. Seeking to define the "grammar" of this language of the ineffable, Cottrell suggests that in the *MAP*, "as in all her major poems, the

⁴⁶ Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978), 1:380.

⁴⁷ Salminen, ed. *MAP*, p. 87.

linguistic problem Marguerite confronts is how to devise strategies whereby the *Verbe* of which the text is composed can efface itself and, by so doing, signify the *Tout-Verbe* . . . source of all speech" (pp. 98–99). He supports his analysis with notions drawn from linguistics, rhetoric, and the categories of Lacanian psychoanalysis (the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic). Thus, after an introductory section of some 260 lines, in the first part of the *MAP*,

[t]he convergence of specular, baptismal, and conjugal metaphors in Marguerite's account of the *mortificatio* points to a self that is constituted within what Lacan calls the Imaginary. Originating in "the mirror stage" of infancy, the Imaginary is a category of being in which the "I," seeing in the Other "a salutary *imago*" and "an ideal unity" it feels it lacks, tries to master its world by identifying with the Other. (p. 109)

Cottrell suggests that Marguerite's text quickly moves beyond the Imaginary stage to the Symbolic—a "category of being into which the human being emerges when he begins to acquire language" (p. 110)—by means of a meditation on Matthew 12:50, in which the *je* of the poem takes symbolic possession of the names of mother, daughter, sister, and spouse of Christ, that is, of various Christ-like qualities. *Je* no longer defines itself "in terms of the anthropomorphically limiting concept" of spouse or of mother, daughter, or sister, that belong to the Imaginary (*ibid.*). Cottrell identifies the four allegorical accounts staging the relations between the speaker and Christ as the second part of the poem. Having undergone an experience of mortification, the first-person narrator is reborn in God. Marguerite makes "a perceptual shift away from the concept of the self as reality, seeing its own (imperfect) image in God's Word, to that of self as a reflection of Christ" (p. 116). But since the aim of the *Miroir* is to bring the Christian to see the whole that is the divine, the text goes beyond the Imaginary and the Symbolic toward what Cottrell calls the Iconic in order to express Marguerite's message:

What the world calls real is in fact unreal. Within the context of Christian revelation, what Lacan calls *imaginaire* turns out to be not imaginary but real, for the Christian is an other. The text that represents this perception is an iconic text. . . . As in an icon, the relationship between Marguerite, the signifier, the *Verbe*, and Christ, the signified, the *Tout-Verbe*, is that of resemblance or likeness. (pp. 119–20)

In this way, the poem seeks to "impose itself on the reader's consciousness as a mirror that reflects the iconic figure of Christ, inseparable, the text would have us believe, from our own image" (p. 120). The affirmation of the unity of Christ and the speaker leads to the realization of the

inadequacy of language to transmit this experience. Cottrell continues: "the text enacts the experience of *mortificatio* on the level of discourse. It humbles itself and, confessing its grossness and baseness, declares itself to be 'moins que rien'" (p. 121). In actuality, this declaration is made by the speaking *je*, the sinful soul itself:

Moy donques ver de terre, moins que riens,
Chienne morte, pourriture de fiens. (vv. 1373–74)

Nonetheless, these words help us see the paradox which informs the entire last part of the *MAP*: "With proper authorial manipulation, . . . a text, although it cannot contain the *Tout-Verbe*, can be polished and cleaned until it is so smooth . . . that it becomes a mirror capable of reflecting not only the sinful soul of the self but also the glory of the Johannine *logos*" (p. 122).

The richness of Cottrell's interpretation should be clear. Through the deployment of Lacanian categories, he activates the metaphor of the mirror which informs the whole of the poem, even if it is not inscribed in referential terms in the text itself. This controlled use of anachronism renews the interpretive schemes generally employed in analysing 16th-century texts; it underscores both the depth and originality of Marguerite's verse as well as her understanding of her own poetics.

In *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry of Spiritual Ascent* (1989), Paula Sommers discerns a double structure in the organization of the *Miroir*, based on two complementary patterns: "The *Miroir* combines tertiary patterns based upon the exploitation of Scriptural material with the steps of the triple way" (p. 52). The first pattern is the "frame" technique, which results in the poem's symmetrical composition in sections of "paraphrase-parable-paraphrase":

The poem begins with short paraphrases culled from the Old and New Testaments (vv. 1–378), includes a central passage in which the narrator develops a series of parables based on concepts introduced in the preceding section (vv. 379–840), and concludes with another sequence of short Biblical passages (vv. 841–1434). (p. 52)

As a careful reader of Scripture, Marguerite folds a close paraphrase of the Bible into her prayer, which flowers into a personal meditation. Reading, prayer, and meditation are the spiritual techniques Saint Bonaventure prescribed in his *De Triplici Via* for each stage of the threefold mystical way—*purgatio*, *illuminatio*, *perfectio*. The second pattern that governs the poem, according to Sommers, thus derives from the Bonaventuran scheme:

Purgatio forms a relatively short introductory sequence (vv. 1–94). *Illuminatio*, which occupies the center of the *Miroir*, merits over seven hundred verses (vv. 95–852). . . . The narrator recalls that Christ's death has brought forgiveness (vv. 83–137) and created a new relationship between man and God. The idea of Christ-as-brother encourages her to reflect upon His kindness towards her, and her Biblical reading reveals that she is spiritually daughter, mother, wife, and sister of her Saviour. . . . The *Miroir* concludes with a perfective sequence (vv. 853–1034 [*sic* for 1434]). (pp. 52–53)

For Sommers, the use of both tertiary patterns shows the “strong af[f]inities” the *Miroir* has with “the ladder-poems of the 1520's” (p. 52), among which was the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*. However whereas those “ladder-poems” were characterized by a movement of spiritual ascent, the *Miroir* is the first “to depict spiritual progress in terms of descent as well as ascent. . . . The soul hesitates and falters, progresses and regresses” (pp. 65–66).⁴⁸

The Numerological Structure of the Miroir: A New Reading

Despite their differences, and even if they establish divisions in different places, recent analyses concur in discerning a ternary structure in the *MAP*. None of them, however, considers the whole range of numerical structures to which Marguerite, along with many of her contemporaries, attached such importance. We will argue here that taking account of a combination of diverse numerological structures can restore the text's readability. Unlike earlier interpretations, we take as constituting the *Miroir* properly speaking only the poem's first 1000 lines. These form a coherent whole and are followed by an *Oraison à Dieu* of 434 verses placed at the end. This precise designation is printed, among the biblical references, in the margin of the text next to verse 1001 from the 1533 Augereau editions onward.⁴⁹ The heart of the *Miroir*, strictly speaking then, is made up of three parts. The first is an introduction (vv. 1–172), whose last line presents the

⁴⁸ Cf. p. 53: “purity is so far beyond her in the opening lines [of the *Miroir*] that she seeks descent rather than ascent.” Barbara Marczuk-Szwed also proposes a ternary structure for the *Miroir*, different from that of other scholars, without however offering any decisive justification for the divisions suggested. According to Marczuk-Szwed, a short first section (vv. 1–260) is followed by a second (vv. 261–880) and third sections (vv. 881–1434), the last of which is said to represent an “élan spontané de la prière.” See “Le mysticisme biblique de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis* (Folia Literaria) 38 (1997), 9–19.

⁴⁹ Despite the presence of this marginal note in the 1547 edition of the *Marguerites* used by Cottrell, the critic writes of “the long second half of the poem” that “goes nowhere from a narrative point of view” (*Grammar*, p. 116). This observation tends to confirm the necessity of considering the *oraison* apart from the rest of the poem.

principal topic—the soul treated by God “Comme mere, fille, sœur, et espouse.” A development follows (vv. 173–926), comprised of three sections, each of which has four parts of increasing length, presenting the four elements of comparison in a variety of situations. A structuring role is thus played by the number 12, whose sacred associations are well known. The conclusion (vv. 927–1000) repeats several times the tetrad “mere, fille, sœur, espouse” that constitutes the fourfold allegory of the sinful soul. These relationships, which cannot apply together to a single person, draw the relationship of the soul to God into the orbit of negative theology.

1–1000. The “mirror” in the Miroir

The poem’s long introduction begins with a series of rhetorical questions interspersed in the meditation of the sinful soul (vv. 1–7, 65–66, 93–94, 121). In three passages, the *je* confesses its humility, its weakness, sin, and nothingness (vv. 1–30, 43–64, 100–38), to which respond three passages where it celebrates the grace that brings salvation (vv. 31–42, 65–100, 139–72). The first of the four uses of the word *grace* appears in line 33, a number with clear Christological symbolism. The introduction ends with an apostrophe to God’s “Charité ardente” (vv. 150–72), based notably on a series of seven uses (4 + 3) of the verbs *aimer* (vv. 149, 151, 152, 158) and *donner* (vv. 154, 160, 169).

The start of the middle section of the poem sets forth the four terms “mere, fille, sœur, espouse” in two different orders:

- 173–88: Mère
- 189–214: Sœur
- 215–18: Fille
- 219–46: Épouse

- 247–60: Fille
- 261–318: Mère
- 319–34: Sœur
- 335–64: Épouse

A prayer of thanksgiving (vv. 365–78), containing an apostrophe to God echoing the female tetrad (“O mon Frere, Pere, Enfant, et Espoux,” v. 367), is followed by a series of the sinful soul’s confessions, connected by a double parallelism: each confession retells an episode found in the Bible in which the soul takes on, in turn, one of the roles of the previous tetrad, perverted by sin:

- 379–414: Wicked daughter, based on the parable of the prodigal son (v. 383).
- 415–96: Wicked mother, based on the episode of the judgment of Solomon (v. 445).
- 497–580: Wicked sister, taken from an episode in Numbers (12:1–14); the sinful soul sees itself as Miriam, afflicted with leprosy after having spoken against Moses along with Aaron, her “frere en trahison” (v. 505).
- 581–926: Wicked wife, based on Jeremiah.

The twelfth and last section of the central development section, almost twice as long as the three preceding ones (345 lines), has several phases. Unlike the reaction of parents to their wayward children or the brother to his guilty sister, which might lead to forgiveness, the reaction of a husband to his unfaithful wife is inevitably characterized by severity (vv. 581–602). Marguerite marvels at God’s clemency, of love the “seul et parfaict exemple” (vv. 603–06), before going on to the next stages: a fine marriage between social unequals (vv. 609–16); the seriousness of the “piteux cas” of the sinful wife (vv. 617–58), whose shame at abandoning Christ is underscored by the anaphora “Laissé vous ay,” repeated ten times (vv. 642–58);⁵⁰ the attitude of the unfaithful wife who immediately identifies her lover: “C’est l’Ennemy, et le Monde, et la Chair” (vv. 659–84); the mercy shown by the Lord, “vray espoux,” that fails to produce any effect on the “brebiz errante” (vv. 685–741); the decisive reading of the third chapter of Jeremiah, along with a long quotation from the “sainct prophete,” in which the wife sees her own misdeeds as if in a mirror (vv. 741–80); the repentance of the sinner and divine forgiveness (vv. 781–830). It is in this final stage of the last of the twelve sections of the *Miroir*’s central section that we find its most strongly stated and most evangelical profession of faith:

Avéz usé de vostre grand’ clemence:
 Mettant en moy une si vive Foy:
 Que vous sçachant Maistre, Seigneur, et Roy,
 (De qui debvois par raison avoir crainte)
 Par vraye amour senty ma paour estaincte:
 En vous croyant mary si gratieux,
 Bon, doulx, piteux, misericordieux. (vv. 796–802)

⁵⁰ Marie Holban compares this anaphora to Bouchet’s “j’ay delaissé” (“Le *Miroir*,” p. 145).

This is the only use in the body of the poem of the expression “vive foy,” so characteristic of evangelical theology. It is intensified by the adverb “si,” which highlights the gift of saving and life-giving faith—in a way exceptional compared with the discourse of other members of the “Navarrian network”—experienced as a form of paroxysm. Quite naturally, this twelfth section closes with an apostrophe to “Charité ardente” (vv. 831–80). This echoes the apostrophe of verses 150–72, opening with the same hemistich “O Charité.”⁵¹ Marguerite stresses the regeneration of the sinner, who becomes, in God, a “creature nouvelle” (v. 833). In this way, in the words of Cottrell, quoted earlier, she allows for “a perceptual shift away from the concept of the self as reality, seeing its own (imperfect) image in God’s Word, to that of self as a reflection of Christ” (*Grammar*, p. 116). The spouse has returned to the “Gratieux licé” (v. 844), locus of divine grace, but she is blinded by “Le bien de [Dieu], qui est tant admirable” (v. 865):

Las, qu’est cecy: jettant en hault ma veüe,
Je voy en vous bonté si incongneue,
Grace et amour si incomprehensible,
Que la veüe m’en demeure invisible. (vv. 853–56)

The rhetoric of the oxymoron reactivates the metaphor of the mirror here and prepares the way for the Pauline inversion of death and life, a recurrent motif in evangelical writing, taken up in the *Oraison* at the very end of the poem:

Vie sans fin a faict nostre mort vive.
Mort a donné à vie mort neïfve.
Par ceste mort, moy morte reçoy vie:
Et au vivant par la mort suis ravie. (vv. 885–88)

The third section that forms the conclusion of the *Miroir* (vv. 927–1000) repeats six times the masculine tetrad “Filz, Pere, Espoux et Frere”; indeed, this is found four times in the space of ten lines (vv. 932–42), with the elements inverted two by two or the reversal of those in the middle. The repetition of the “lieu, nom, et office / De Fille, Sœur, Mere, Espouse” (vv. 946–47) completes the trajectory that leads the soul from mortification to union with God:

⁵¹ The position of these two passages highlights their symmetry: the first begins 150 lines into the poem, the second concludes 149 lines before the end of the *Miroir* proper at verse 1000.

Vous appellant Pere (parlant à vous
 Sans crainte avoir) Enfant, Frere et Espoux,
 Vous escoutant, je m'oy Mere nommer,
 Sœur, Fille, Espouse . . . (vv. 951–54)

In this way, the *Miroir* concludes with a triumphant double anaphora, symmetrical to the “Laissé vous ay” expressing shame. This is made up of three repetitions of the affirmation “Or vous ay je” and nine causal expressions beginning with “Puisque” (“vous / à vous / il vous / au vostre”). Twelve elements thus close this final section of the *Miroir*, declaring unqualified adhesion to God. According to patristic tradition, the number twelve represents the Church Triumphant, the ultimate destiny of the Church Suffering and the Church Militant.⁵² Here, it undergirds the representation of the “deified” self,⁵³ regenerate in Christ:

Puis qu'à vous suis, à aultre ne veulx estre.
 Puis que mon cueur au vostre avéz uny,
 S'il s'en depart, qu'il soit sans fin puny.
 Car plus dur est que la dampnation,
 Sentir de vous la separation. (vv. 994–98)

At the end of the thousand verses that constitute the mirror in the *Miroir*, it is impossible not to be struck by the presence of sacred numbers inscribed not in the linguistic thread of the text but in the poem's deep structure. This must be understood in light of the importance accorded to numbers and their symbolism both in the Bible⁵⁴ and in neo-Platonism, whose ideas Marguerite helped to spread in France. Ancient philosophy, interpreted through the lens of Ficino and Christianity, attributed a metaphysical significance to number, of which Renaissance poets often made use.⁵⁵ In Marguerite's case, this seems to have been a major force of poetic

⁵² See René Allendy, *Le symbolisme des nombres, essai d'arithmosophie*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1983).

⁵³ The past participle “déifié” appears in verse 884 of the editions of Du Bois and the first two of Augereau (“Vie mourant d'amour deifiée”). It is replaced by “verifiée” in subsequent editions.

⁵⁴ Ernst Robert Curtius reminds us that in the Bible “number was sanctified as a form-bestowing factor in the divine work of creation,” *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1953), p. 504. Curtius offers many examples of medieval texts whose composition is based on numerological principles, especially on a given number of lines, like 100 or 1000. This practice was still current in the 16th century, as can be seen from the titles of many Latin and vernacular texts: *Hecatomythium*, *Hecatelegium*, *Chiliades*, *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, or the *Hecatodistichon* in memory of Marguerite referred to in note 2 above.

⁵⁵ See Kees Meerhoff, *Rhétorique et poétique au XVI^e siècle en France* (Leiden, 1986), pp. 15ff.

creation. In the practice of rhetorical *copia*, the queen favors *copia verborum* (*elocutio*) over *copia rerum* (*inventio*) in pursuit of the goal of mortification. Indeed, in the “mirror” itself, *inventio*—the search for ideas to support an argument, a form of composition gratifying to the intellect—plays only a minimal role, being limited to the fourfold allegory of the soul as mother, daughter, sister, and spouse. It is *elocutio* that elaborates on this for more than 750 lines, including the initial double evocation followed by the four narratives, by means of all the techniques of stylistic amplification recommended in contemporary treatises on poetics:⁵⁶ epithets, periphrases, enumeration, anaphora, comparison, and all forms of lexical repetition, such as derivation or polyptoton.⁵⁷

The very project of a composition with an infinite number of verses—1000 being the symbol of an innumerable quantity—can be considered part of this endeavor and as an exercise in the mortification of the reasoning self. Writing a meditation of 1000 lines is not a challenge taken up as a means of self-glorification but a trial intended to purify the soul, requiring it to contemplate its nothingness without possibility of evasion. Proceeding along different lines, our analysis is thus in agreement with that of Cottrell, which also stresses writing as a form of mortification and rejects the idea that the *MAP* was composed in haste.

1001–1434. “Oraison à Dieu”

As is clearly indicated by the words “ORAISON À DIEU,” placed in the margin next to verse 1001 from Augereau’s editions on, the poem concludes with a prayer, a supplication. This important structural break, previously neglected, is marked at the outset by an eloquent apostrophe to the “Pere et Createur” (with no reference to brother or husband). The soul asks to be admitted to paradise and not to be denied entry by the enemy, that is, the devil from hell:

Helas, mon DIEU, mon Pere et Createur,
Ne souffrez pas l'ennemy inventeur
De tout peché, avoir ceste puissance,
Qu'il me face perdre vostre presence. (vv. 1001–04)

ORAISON À DIEU

⁵⁶ See Pierre Fabri, *Le Grand et Vrai Art de pleine rhétorique* (Rouen, 1521), ed. Alexandre Héron (Geneva, 1969).

⁵⁷ The extensive and combined use of these stylistic procedures in works of edification or religious propaganda is a shared characteristic of the authors of the “Navarrian network.” See Isabelle Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète et la connivence: Écriture concertée chez les Évangéliques français (1523–1534)* (Geneva, 2005), pp. 239–68.

The remainder of the passage explains this request. Unlike the first 1000 lines of the *Miroir*, no numeric or geometric construction is perceptible here. Instead, there is a logical movement, a progressive argument, in which several stages can be delineated. After the exordium (vv. 1001–14), the prayer develops in four more-or-less equal sections of about 100 lines. The first expresses a desire for death (vv. 1015–110). The Christian, freed from fear and united with Jesus by “grande amour” (v. 1037), calls upon death because it offers ultimate release from the flesh and sin, thanks to the “grand mystere / De ceste croix” (vv. 1027–28):

Et tout ainsi que paour nous retardoit:
 Amour desir de Mort donner nous doit.
 Car, si amour est au cueur, sans mentir
 Il ne sçauroit aultre chose sentir. (vv. 1041–44) 1. Jehan 4

Desire for death, a commonplace of evangelical literature, has its most important biblical source in the Pauline *cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo*: “mort est chose heureuse / À une ame de luy bien amoureuse” (vv. 1075–76). This whole passage, deeply influenced by the teachings of Briçonnet, presents a rewriting of common motifs of evangelical discourse, present notably in two works close to the *Miroir* in time and in spirit: Marguerite’s own *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* (cf. vv. 283–84 for the desire for death) and Marot’s *Déploration de Florimond Robertet* (vv. 353–54). The rest of the *Miroir*’s *Oraison* reminds the reader that, for the soul, death is nothing but “la porte / Par qui il fault que de sa prison sorte” (vv. 1077–78). Marguerite’s contemporaries were familiar with the double motif of the door and the prison. The “portes de mort chrétienne désirée,” about which Briçonnet wrote to Marguerite (*Correspondance*, 1:74), appear already in her *Dialogue* (vv. 1172 and 1254) as well as in Marot’s *Déploration* (v. 394), then later in the *MJCC* (v. 893), as does the Platonic image of the body as prison of the soul (*Dialogue*, v. 178; *Déploration*, vv. 334–40). The assurance of the saving function of death is voiced in an ardent appeal in the closing lines of this first section of the prayer: “O mort o mort, venéz” (v. 1109), a faith-filled echo of verse 111.

Once beyond the fear of death, the Christian needs to move beyond the fear of judgment. This is the clear logical connection that leads into the second section, couched in an eschatological perspective (vv. 1111–96): “Puisque la mort m’est vie si plaisante, / ... Craindre ne dois si non le jugement” (vv. 1111–13). Fear is held at bay by the sinful soul’s twofold declaration. On the one hand, “Dieu est juste” (v. 1123) et ce “Juge / Est mon Espoux, mon Pere et mon refuge” (vv. 1143–44), which marks a return to

some of the familial metaphors found in the body of the *Miroir*. On the other hand, Jesus Christ has become her “Advocat” (v. 1151): “Du jugement n’auray donc plus de crainte” (v. 1191). The soul, well aware of its weakness, recognizes that it deserves nothing but hell (“Et congnois bien mon infidelité, / Digne d’Enfer, et sa crudelité,” vv. 1197–98), and it is this idea which introduces the third section of the “Oraison” (vv. 1197–312). The denial of the idea of personal merit (v. 1199) leads to the emphasis placed on “Foy, qui unit par Charité ardente / Au Createur” (vv. 1283–84). This “grande Charité, et amour” (v. 1300) is then hammered home rhetorically by means of polyptoton and a series of eight repetitions of the noun *amour* and a further eight of the verb *aymer* in twelve lines:

Mon amour n’est pour l’aymer, mais la sienne
 En moy l’ayme, que je sentz comme mienne.
 Il s’ayme donc en moy, et par m’aymer
 Il faict mon cueur par amour enflammer. (vv. 1305–08)

The last section of the prayer leads the soul gradually to silence, in the face of the incommensurable greatness of this love (vv. 1313–434):

Cesser doy bien parler de l’altitude
 De ceste amour . . . (vv. 1375–76).

This ending is marked by two apostrophes; the first, the longer of the two, addressed to “l’aymant”⁵⁸—“O vray amant, de Charité la source”—gives way to the acknowledgement of the powerlessness of human “dire” in the face of “que c’est d’amour” (vv. 1344–45) and the realization of divine ineffability (v. 1353). This is the logical preparation for the end of the text: “L’impossible me fera doncques taire” (v. 1367).

Before closing, however, the author justifies having spoken by declaring clearly and for the first time her didactic purpose: “faisant l’edification / De son prouchain” (vv. 1365–66). Paraphrasing the Pauline Epistles (“O indicible haultesse,” v. 1387), the prayer continues with an apostrophe to the apostle (“O bon saint Pol,” v. 1394). The use of the second person plural, repeated twice in the space of three lines, resounds as an exhortation to the reader to learn from the teachings of Saint Paul: “Oyez qu’il dit” (v. 1387), “Ecoutez-le” (v. 1399). The foreknowledge of the inexpressible (vv. 1353, 1387) causes a slippage in the enunciative position as the *je* is effaced, giving way to the apostle, and melting finally into the *nous* of all

⁵⁸ This is to whom the apostrophe is addressed in the first edition of 1531.

Christians. At this point, the poem becomes an ever more authentic Pauline *miroir*; the words of the apostle are highlighted by quotation marks, intended to anchor these utterances worthy of memory in the heart of the reader.⁵⁹ Before falling silent like Saint Paul (“Je me tairay,” v. 1426), gratitude for the “tresgrand don de Foy” (v. 1413) leads the sinful soul, aware of its unworthiness (“pouldre je me confesse et fange,” v. 1427), to a personally signed thanksgiving (“moy sa MARGUERITE,” v. 1430), which marks the unfailing acceptance of God’s gifts. Taking possession of the text by means of the play on her name, the female speaker reduces the self to its spiritual essence and takes on the full and complete union of the “âme” with God. Having reflected the profound guilt that made this soul unworthy of salvation, the *Miroir* pays an ultimate tribute to the Creator:

Ne puis faillir à rendre la louenge
De tant de biens, qu’avoir je ne merite,
Qu’il luy plaist faire à moy sa MARGUERITE.
AU ROY DU * CIEL immortel, invisible I. Tim. 1
SEUL DIEU puissant et incomprehensible
Soit tout honneur, gloire, louenge, amour
Par les siecles des siecles sans sejour. (vv. 1428–34)

As at the beginning of the second third of the poem,⁶⁰ Marguerite here uses “the language of the evangelical village,”⁶¹ which made the Pauline verse (1 Tim. 1:17) the mark of several works of the “Navarrian network,” whether on the title page itself⁶² or in the body of the text, as in the *Traicté du Souverain Bien*:

Puis donc que l’espouse sçait son espoux estre tout glorieux, mesme *celluy*
auquel seul appartient honneur et gloire, pourquoy cherchera elle en aultre
que en luy gloire et honneur?⁶³

⁵⁹ 16th-century quotation marks—whose function was like that of the pictogram of a hand placed in the margins of manuscripts by medieval copyists to signal aphoristic phrases—are found four times in the epilogue of the *MAP* (vv. 1293–1301, 1387–93, 1400–04, and 1431–34).

⁶⁰ Verses 491–92: “mon Dieu, honneur et gloire / Soit à vous seul et à chascun notoire.”

⁶¹ On this expression, see below.

⁶² “Au seul Dieu tout honneur et gloire”: *Exhortation sur ces saintes parolles de nostre seigneur Jesus. Retournes vous et croies à L’evangile* [Basle, Andreas Cratander, 1525?], fol. Air.

⁶³ *Le Traicté du Souverain Bien* [Paris, Simon Du Bois, 1526?], fol. c6r. For further details on what was to become an evangelical and then a Reformed commonplace, see Garnier-Mathez, *L’Épithète*, pp. 334–37.

Like the *Oraison à Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ* published with the first 1531 edition of the *MAP* and which ends with the words “Louenge à Dieu seul,” Marguerite’s second *Miroir* discretely takes up this evangelical leitmotif:

La honte donq puisse je recevoir
et toy l’honneur, Seigneur, tout seul avoir. (vv. 795–96)⁶⁴

The linguistic complicity linking the two *Miroirs* to other texts produced by the network, despite the years that separate them (and of which this example is but one among many), is the mark of the persistence of a shared spiritual ideal among the evangelical community as well as of an unchanging aspect of the queen’s spirituality.⁶⁵

II. Le Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié

The Physical Experience of the Mirror

The *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*, Marguerite’s last work, is a penitential poem tracing the stages of a personal conversion produced by the contemplation of the crucified Christ, whose suffering is understood as a direct consequence of the sins of the meditator. This program, developed in a simple, easily readable prayer in decasyllabic verse, is presented from the outset:

Seigneur Jesus, que je doy advouër
pour mon exemple et trescler mirouër,
en toy me puis mirer, congnoistre et veoir,
car de me veoir hors de toy n’ay pouvoir.
En me voyant, si grande est ma noirceur,
que je ne suis de moy bon congnoisseur:
dont j’ay besoing que ta clairté premiere,
en m’esclairant, me monstre ta lumiere.⁶⁶

The mirror motif does not appear here as a simple, abstract image, implying few or no particular constraints. Understood in the most literal sense, it becomes the very source of the development of the meditation—and of the text which recreates it. As Robert Cottrell has shown, it is looking

⁶⁴ Another use of it is found in Marot’s *Deporation de Florimond Robertet*, in *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux, 2 vols. (Paris, 1990–93), 1:217, v. 341.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Marguerite de Navarre, *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, ed. Renja Salminen (Helsinki, 1985), vv. 421–22 and 676–78.

⁶⁶ *MJCC*, ed. Fontanella, vv. 1–8.

at the crucified body of Jesus that prompts the poetic subject to turn its gaze toward the self and to the recollection of the sins it has committed.⁶⁷ The body of Christ remains constantly in view and an alternation is established between different moments of the contemplation of Christ in agony (his body being described in detail, feature by feature, as in a series of *blasons*) and moments of introspection. At each point, the sight of a body-part disfigured through suffering brings forth, like an accusatory reflection, the vision of the sins committed by the subject using the same body-part:

En regardant ce beau nez et traitif,
noircy, sanglant, mieulx semblant mort que vif,
mirer je doy le mien qui de santeurs
de douces fleurs et plaisantes odeurs
n'a seulement sellon raison usé,
mais follement par plaisir abusé
.....
Et la santeur du navré ou lepreux,
je la fuyois n'estant hardi ne preux,
mais par orreur le cueur me defailloit
quant la santeur puante m'assailloit. (vv. 387–92, 397–400)

O beaux chevez du vray Nasarien,
en toy me fault mirer mon pauvre rien
mez fols cheveux que j'ay pignez, frisez,
voyant les tiens rompus et debrisez.
J'ay prins plaisir en choses si caducques,
que j'ay cuydé par les mortes perruques
tant amender la beaulté de nature,
que me faisois une autre creature. (vv. 499–506)

This back-and-forth movement structures the poem, accompanied by a dynamic of amplification at each stage and fed by biblical allusions and allegorized speculation. In the second part of the text (i.e., vv. 839ff.), the subject seems to leave aside anatomical considerations in favor of a more global focus on the mystery of Redemption and moving toward union with Christ. Nonetheless, the dynamic of the mirror remains active and the evocation of the crucified body continues to elicit a penitential response:

⁶⁷ Robert D. Cottrell, "The Gaze as the Agency of Presence in Marguerite de Navarre's *Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié*," *French Forum* 13.2 (1988), 133–41. On the praying voice in the *MJCC*, see Ferguson, "Now in a glass darkly."

Regarde icy, mon corps, pour tez vestures
combien Jesus a de deschiquetures. (vv. 929–30)

O mon dur cueur, ne soye différent,
mais haste toy, mire toy dans ce cœur,
et naye <toi> en sa doulce liqueur.
Malheureux <cœur>, qui as esté plus dur
à aymer Dieu qu'un rochier ou un mur
regarde au cœur par charité fendu,
regarde au sang qui en est descendu. (vv. 1135–41)

From the evocation of the crucified body arise also waves of radiant images of purification, redemption, and the new covenant between Christ and his Church:

Esjouys toy, mon ame, et prans ta course,
viens toy mirer, car j'aperçoy la source
de vraye amour et charité non faincte,
qui ne sera pour nul peché estaincte
.....
Regarde icy dedans ce costé dextre,
par vive foy de l'arche la fenestre,
par qui du sein paternel à nous tombe,
la purifique et tresblanche colombe
qui en son bec tien la branche d'olive,
nous assurant de paix ferme et nayve,
voyant saillir l'Esglise sans maculle
de ce costé appourtant une bulle
à sez enfans les assurant du don
donné sans prix, c'est d'eternel pardon. (vv. 1037–40, 1045–54)⁶⁸

Finally, as it nears the end of its spiritual progress, the subject glimpses the paradisiacal beatitude of union with Christ and redemption from sin through the sacrifice of the cross:

Icy je perdz de moy le souvenir
.....
icy je perdz ce que le monde loue
.....
icy je boy le vin tout à loisir;
du vray plaisir qui passe tout plaisir

⁶⁸ On the patristic sources of the analogy between the wound in Christ's side and the Ark of the Covenant, see Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 202–04 (where he cites Saint Augustine).

.....

Icy la foy m'en lict la teorique,
et charité m'en donne la pratique
icy je mange à la celleste table,
icy reçoÿ le baiser delectable

.....

Icy se void le peché rigoureux,
purgé du sang, estre faict bienheureux;
la coulpe icy tant salle et tant meschante
du viel Adam, tresheureuse l'on chante.

(vv. 1322, 1324, 1326–27, 1336–39, 1344–47)

At the point of experiencing the annihilation of self, the precondition of union with God, the poetic speaker invites the reader to take over its role in the poem's final lines:

là je le perdz et je ne le voys plus,
vous qui lisés contemplés le surplus. (vv. 1362–63)

The abruptness of this conclusion may seem surprising, especially when we consider that in the nearly contemporary *Prisons*, the “moment of nothingness” (*rien*) gives rise to an extended development. It would seem that in the *MJCC* (and we shall return to this point below), Marguerite set aside the effusions of her apophatic mysticism in favor of a more traditional spiritual approach.

A Work Unlike Others

The lengthy development of a *blason* mirroring the sufferings of Christ gives the *MJCC* its originality, even if in Marguerite's work as in religious literature in general, the passion is a frequent theme of meditation precisely because of its central place in Christian doctrine. It is a practice in which the faithful were encouraged by their attendance at religious services and sermons. The tradition (to which we will return in relation to the interpretation of the text) was strengthened through the influence of the *devotio moderna*, focused as it was on the “imitation of Christ,” and had been embraced by Evangelicals, especially those close to Marguerite who were in agreement with Luther concerning the centrality of the *theologia crucis*.⁶⁹ This emphasis was not their sole preserve, however. Marot, for

⁶⁹ See Brunero Gherardini, “La *Theologia crucis*, chiave ermeneutica per la lettura e lo studio di Martino Lutero,” *Doctor communis* 28 (1975), 252–90; idem, *Theologia crucis: L'eredità di Lutero nell'evoluzione teologica della Riforma* (Rome, 1978).

example, had included in the *Adolescence clémentine* an “Oraison contemplative devant le crucifix,” translated from a work by Nicolas Barthelemy de Loches that was entirely traditional in outlook.⁷⁰

In Marguerite's work, the motif had had an important place ever since the correspondence with Briçonnet, who recommended the “discipline de la Croix.”⁷¹ In the *Petit œuvre dévot et contemplatif* (1524–25), the appearance of the cross marks a decisive turning point in the soul's journey.⁷² A meditation *Devant l'ymaige du crucifix* has come down to us in a manuscript written before 1525.⁷³ The *Oraison à Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ* (1531) and the *Contemplation sur Agnus Dei* (after 1547) turn to Christ with the same astonished pain and gratitude:

Tout vostre corps avez laissé hascher,
Piedz, mains percer, et mort en la croix prendre
Et par ruisseaux vostre saint sang respandre.⁷⁴

Dessus la croix par peché attaché,
Tu as vestu le vestement taché
Pour nous donner la blanche et necte estolle.
Comme pescheur as esté descraché
Mocqué, battu et de fouetz haschez,
Prenant plaisir à jouer nostre rolle.⁷⁵

Further examples could be cited from the *Chansons spirituelles*. In the *Navire*, François I invites his sister to embrace the cross, to realize that each of her sins is answered by one of Christ's sufferings, and to take refuge in the Savior's “cœur ouvert.”⁷⁶ However, all these reminders of the passion remain isolated; the *MJCC* is the only poem where the ongoing subject of meditation is the vision of the tortured body of the Crucified, experiencing his humanity through suffering.

⁷⁰ Raymond Lebègue, “La source d'un poème religieux de Marot,” in *Mélanges Abel Lefranc* (Paris, 1936; Geneva, 1972), pp. 58–68.

⁷¹ See Briçonnet–Marguerite, *Correspondance*, 1:32, 40, 197, 199, 200, 206; 2:150, 152, 224.

⁷² *Petit Œuvre dévot*, vv. 88ff., in Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Cazauran, vol. 1, *Pater Noster et Petit Œuvre dévot*, ed. Sabine Lardon (Paris, 2001), pp. 84ff.

⁷³ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 3525, fol. 12r–v; Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Cazauran, vol. 8, ed. Cooper, pp. 231–32.

⁷⁴ *Oraison à Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ*, vv. 31–33, ed. Renja Salminen (Helsinki, 1981), p. 40.

⁷⁵ *Contemplation sur Agnus Dei*, vv. 41–46, in *Oraison à Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ*, p. 331.

⁷⁶ *La Navire*, ed. Robert Marichal (Paris, 1956), vv. 863–921. On the theme of the “cœur ouvert,” see Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, p. 201.

The Composition, Publication, and Reception of the MJCC

The *MJCC* was most likely written during the last year of Marguerite de Navarre's life, perhaps between April and December 1549, in Pau and in the château of Odos (near Tarbes). The queen was deeply affected that year by the sermons preached in Pau during Holy Week by a Franciscan friar, Brother Gilles. On Holy Thursday, she referred to the sermons in a letter to Mme de La Rochefoucauld:

Je ne veux faillir à vous dire que toute cette compagnie a tant de contentement de frère Gilles qu'il n'est possible de plus. Il commença la Passion, il y eut dimanche huit jours, laquelle il a continué jusques aujourd'hui. Il n'a réservé pour vendredi que les sept paroles que Notre-Seigneur dit en la croix.⁷⁷

On 22 April, writing to the same correspondent, Marguerite again praised the "prescheur qui a fait une Passion triomphante et une Resurrection qu'il continuera toute cette semaine." According to Raymond Ritter, the friar in question could have been Gilles Caillau, the "bon religieux Cordelier," who, Florimond de Raemond tells us, administered extreme unction to the queen and "l'assista jusques au dernier soupir."⁷⁸ Given that Brother Gilles was a Friar Minor, an order that counted Saint Bonaventure among its principal theologians, we might suppose that his sermons called listeners to a spiritual ascesis tied to the representation of Christ's suffering.

Less than eight months later, Marguerite passed away in Odos, leaving, among other unpublished works, her own meditation on the passion, a poem of nearly 1400 lines, "incorrect, impoly, imparfaict et sans tiltre," in the judgment of the Dominican Pierre Olivier.⁷⁹ Seven years later, Brother Pierre would "polish" the poem and have it published. In the dedicatory letter he addressed to Marguerite de France, the author's niece and sister of Henri II, Olivier explained the circumstances by which he had come

⁷⁷ This letter was published by Raymond Ritter, *Les Solitudes de Marguerite de Navarre (1527-1549)* (Paris, 1953), p. 151.

⁷⁸ Ritter, *Les Solitudes*, pp. 151-52; Florimond de Raemond, *La Naissance, progresz, et decadence de l'heresie de ce siecle. Livre septieme* (Rouen, 1647), p. 856.

⁷⁹ Pierre Olivier, preface to the *Art et usage du souverain miroir du Chrestien* (Paris, Guillaume Le Noir, 1556), fol. c3v. Beyond his edition of Marguerite's poem, Olivier, *docteur en théologie*, is known by only two works: *De inventione dialectica libellus* (Paris, Pierre Vidoue, 1540) and (with his edition of the *MJCC*) *Le Miroir du chrestien et moyen de cognoistre Dieu et soimesme*. See Jacques Quétif and Jacques Echard, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum recensiti*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1719-21).

into possession of the text. According to his account, the queen's death, occurring when "à peine . . . estoient tirées les dernières lignes," would have caused it to remain like the talent "ensevely et sans fruit" (cf. Matt. 25:14–30), had God not ordained otherwise:

Mais le Seigneur Dieu qui nous a laissé et ordonné les livres et escritures saintes pour nostre spirituelle consolation, pour nostre salut et à sa gloire: a tellement proveu, qu'il a permis qu'iceluy me fut communiqué par les mains royales de la dicte Princesse, peu de jours avant sa mort . . . et l'ay en telle reverence que l'ay presque adoré, comme livre contenant divins, celestes et spirituels propos, langages exquis, et graves sentences. Et ne voulant estre receleur d'un si grand et royal tresor, craignant aussi d'encourir avec l'inique et desloyal serviteur la male grace, indignation et punition du Seigneur Dieu, et la vostre, pour avoir recelé et caché le dict œuvre . . . je n'ay voulu differer d'iceluy proferer, treshumblement presenter et rendre entre les mains de vostre majesté, à laquelle iceluy œuvre tacitement et de droict se disoit appartenir, comme à la vraye heritiere de ladicte feu Royne vostre treshonorée tante. (pp. c3v–c4r)

This passage confirms what is also suggested by the small number and imperfect state of the remaining manuscripts—that, at the moment of the queen's death, the poem had not yet undergone final revision or been circulated.

Three manuscripts of the *MJCC* have survived, none of which can be considered an authoritative copy prepared with a view to publication.⁸⁰ Lucia Fontanella, to whom we owe the only critical edition of the work to date,⁸¹ demonstrated that they attest to a first stage of composition, followed by incomplete revisions. Two manuscripts give the text of the first phase. The oldest, probably overseen by the queen herself, is now in Turin (T).⁸² It has lacunae,⁸³ obvious errors—including errors of meter, due perhaps in part to dictation—and several passages that are difficult

⁸⁰ A fourth manuscript, listed in the catalogue of the Monmerqué auction (1851), seems to have disappeared. Entitled *Le Mirouer au Chrestien sur la personne de Jesus-Christ, contenant au vray l'art et usage de soy bien mirer, composé par excellente princesse . . .*, it also contained three sonnets and an epitaph for the queen by Jean de Morel; see Raymond Lebègue, "Le second *Miroir* de Marguerite de Navarre," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 107 (1963), 46–56 (p. 52). The terms of the title suggest it post-dated the 1556 edition.

⁸¹ A new edition, being prepared by Nicole Cazauran and Isabelle Pantin, is to be published as part of the *Œuvres complètes* of Marguerite de Navarre, ed. Cazauran.

⁸² Turin, Biblioteca nazionale, L V 4, fols. 195r–224v. "T" is Fontanella's designation. This manuscript also contains the *Heptaméron*. Fontanella considers that it was "il risultato di una fase redazionale del testo sotto diretto controllo dell'autrice" (ed., *MJCC*, p. xv).

⁸³ A number of lines are missing, as is clear where an anomaly in the rhyme scheme indicates that the second verse of a couplet is omitted: vv. 611–12, 972–73, 1016–17, and 1120–21.

to understand.⁸⁴ Fontanella selected it as the text on which to base her edition, thinking that the queen must have given it to her niece Marguerite de France, who then took it to Piedmont following her marriage to the duke of Savoy.

The second manuscript (P₁), derived from T, is in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.⁸⁵ In it, a number of obvious mistakes are corrected, but many misreadings have also been introduced. Unlike its probable model (at least in the form in which we have it), P₁ gives a title, followed by five lines of verse, on the verso of the page preceding the start of the text (fol. 191v):

Le myroir de Jesucrist crucifie
 Cy est la vraye cognoissance
 du peche et de l'ignocence
 et qui se peult myrer et veoir
 en Crist en aura le sçavoir
 car sans luy n'avons qu'ignorance.

In addition, following the last line of the *MJCC* (fol. 217v) there is a "Huictain d'elle mesme," which is incomplete with only seven verses:

Je cherche aultant la croix et la desire
 Comme autrefois je l'ay vullu fouyr
 Je cherche aultant par tourment en jouyr
 Comme autrefois j'ay craint son dur martire
 Car celle croix mon ame à Dieu atire
 Dont tous les biens qu'au monde puis avoir
 Quicter je veulx la croix me doit souffire.

The phase of revisions made to the poem is visible in a third manuscript, P₂, also in the BnF, to which it came from the library of Président Bouhier. In this volume, entitled *Les Derniers [sic] Œuvres de la Reyne de Navarre lesquelles n'ont encores esté imprimées*, the *MJCC* is found alongside several plays, *La Navire*, and *Les Prisons*.⁸⁶ Robert Marichal dates it to shortly

⁸⁴ Fontanella signals them at vv. 76, 167, 374, 381, 418, 458, 508, 524, 672, 742, 970, 1048, and 1276 (ed. cit., p. xii). According to the editor, these *lectiones difficultiores* prove that the manuscript is not a faulty copy. They indicate with even greater certainty, however, that it was still a draft.

⁸⁵ BnF, fr. 1525, fols. 191v–217v. "P₁" is Fontanella's designation. The manuscript bears the arms of Just de Tournon, the nephew of the Cardinal, and contains fragments of the *Heptaméron*.

⁸⁶ BnF, fr. 24.298, fols. 91r–114r: "P₂" according to Fontanella's designation.

before Marguerite's death.⁸⁷ The text is close to the first redaction but somewhat more complete and contains fewer errors.⁸⁸ Obscure passages have been clarified and the versification is not only amended but also modernized by the elimination of almost all the feminine caesuras that remained in the first version, a development in line with what we know about the evolution of the queen's poetics.⁸⁹ P2 bears the title "Le mirouer de la croix," followed, with a single variant, by the five lines of verse reproduced above.⁹⁰

The two posthumous 16th-century editions of the work, prepared independently of each other, are based on manuscripts related to P2. The first was printed in Toulouse in 1552 by Guyon Boudeville, a sympathizer with the Reformation:

*Le mirouer de Jesus Christ crucifié. Composé par feu tres-illustre Princesse, Marguerite de Vallois, Royne de Navarre.*⁹¹

The short title is thus identical to that of P1, and this is followed by the five-line strophe beginning "Cy est la vraye cognoissance" (in its P1 version) as well as the *huitain* "Je cherche aultant la croix." Printed on the verso of the title page, this "Huitain composé par la feu Royne de Navarre, peu de temps avant son trespas" is signed with the motto "C'est mon espoir" and its missing verse has been supplied.⁹² As for the *MJCC* itself, the Boudville edition gives a text close to P2, but more complete (missing verses have been restored) and with many corrections. Above all, however, the margins are filled with biblical references, often in excess of ten per page, a mark of the zeal of the editor. Who this might be, it is impossible to know, since the work bears no liminary indication except for a "Dixain sur

⁸⁷ Marichal, ed. *La Navire*, pp. 68–69.

⁸⁸ It restores the missing lines but also leaves out nine verses which appeared in the first version: vv. 182, 284, 440, 486, 698, 756, 818, 830, and 904.

⁸⁹ See Fontanella, ed. *MJCC*, pp. xlix–xlx. On Marguerite's progressive avoidance of feminine cesurae from 1533 on, see Marguerite de Navarre, *La Coche*, ed. Robert Marichal (Paris and Geneva, 1971), p. 59 and note 20 above.

⁹⁰ BnF, fr. 24.298, fol. 91r. The variant concerns v. 2 "et qui le peult myrer et veoir." However, another hand has corrected vv. 2–3 in the margin: "et qui s'y peut mirer et veoir / de Christ il aura le sçavoir."

⁹¹ The title mentions a *privilege* for three years, which is not printed in this copy. Boudville was hanged in May 1562 as a Protestant. In 1545, he had printed anonymously Marguerite's *Fable du faux Cuyder*, based on the 1543 Paris edition. See Jacques Mégret, "Guyon Boudeville, imprimeur toulousain (1541–1562)," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 6 (1945), 210–301.

⁹² Line six has been added: "C'est le chemin tresseur pour l'aller voir." Two references to Saint Paul (Gal. 6 and Rom. 8) have also been added in the margin.

le trespas de Marguerite de Vallois Royne de Navarre," printed at the end of the text and signed "I. Boffeau."

This extremely rare edition can have had only a limited distribution, and Pierre Olivier was no doubt in good faith when he declared, in 1556, that he was bringing to light a text that had remained hidden under a bushel. The Dominican subjected his own edition, published by Guillaume Le Noir in Paris, to careful correction, as he himself states. He also divided the work into "chapters" with subtitles and placed biblical references in the margins, although these are less numerous than and often different from those in the Boudeville edition. Finally, he gives a new form to the title: *L'art et usage du souverain mirouer du Chrestien*,⁹³ probably with the intention of linking it more closely to the prose work he published at the same time to accompany the queen's poem: *Le Mirouer du Chrestien et moyen de cognoistre Dieu et soimesme*.⁹⁴ If we disregard the numerous variants Olivier introduced on his own initiative, his text has many points of agreement with both P2 and the Boudeville edition, which suggests that he too had access to a manuscript containing the revised version. What he says in his letter to the queen's niece about the circumstances under which he acquired the manuscript in question weighs in favor of the revised version's authenticity.

What are we to conclude from this review of the evidence? We do not have a text of the *MJCC* which we can say with certainty reflects the queen's final wishes. Are we then constrained, as Fontanella believed, to accredit only the Turin manuscript? We do not believe so. We have at our disposal three sources that present independent and relatively similar versions of a text revised almost certainly before Marguerite's death. Moreover, these sources can be tied, with some confidence, to her immediate circle.⁹⁵ At the same time, these sources shed light on the reception of Marguerite's second *Miroir*. This was considerably more modest than that enjoyed by the first, to be sure, since it was limited to two editions that, failing to elicit further interest, almost disappeared without trace.⁹⁶ It is worth

⁹³ The complete title reads: *L'art et usage du souverain mirouer du Chrestien. Composé par excellente Princesse madame Marguerite de France, Royne de Navarre. Avec privilege. A Paris, par Guillaume le Noir, Rue S. Jaques, à la Rose blanche Couronnée, 1556.*

⁹⁴ *Le Mirouer du Chrestien et moyen de cognoistre Dieu et soimesme. Composé par F. Pierre Olivier Docteur Theologien* (Paris, Guillaume Le Noir, 1556).

⁹⁵ In the new edition in preparation by Cazauran and Pantin, the base text will be Boudeville's edition.

⁹⁶ Only a single extant copy of each is known today. A copy of the 1552 edition was discovered in 1963 in Toulouse (see Lebègue, "Le second *Miroir*," p. 53) but has since dis-

noting, however, that among the queen's last poems—those that postdate the death of François I and the collected edition of the *Marguerites*—the *MJCC* is the only one that was printed in the years following her death. Moreover, there were two such publications and each time the editor presented it as the queen's poetic legacy, either by using as an epigraph the “Huitain composé par la feu Royne de Navarre, peu de temps avant son trespas” or, in the dedication of the Parisian edition, describing the poem as the author's last act of charity:

Et tant plus que ladicte mort . . . prevoyoit s'approcher, tant plus elle, à l'exemple de Jesuchrist s'esforceoit d'aviser un chacun de retourner à soy, se mirer et cognoistre ses imperfections . . . O sainte, utile et chrestienne exhortation, laquelle ensuyvant ladicte Princesse mettoit peine nous induyre (avec saint Paul)⁹⁷ à l'inspection de soy, contemplation et spirituel regard de Jesu christ crucifié, prins et advoué de nous pour vray exemple, trespur et excellent mirouer: duquel pour nous en monstrar l'art, pratique et usage nous dresseoit et composoit ce present œuvre et saint poeme.⁹⁸

Moreover, the poem's two editions anchored it in two distinct contexts, in each case, although to differing degrees, with an eye to its appropriation. The Toulouse edition discretely brings the poem into closer alignment with the sources of inspiration of the Reformation, whereas Brother Pierre Olivier, “docteur théologien,” presented it as the illustration of a devotional attitude that he attempted to theorize. The high stakes attaching to the work for contemporaries are evident.

III. *Mirroring the Two Miroirs*

Problems of Interpretation: The MJCC's Objectives and Doctrinal Position

The *MJCC* constitutes both a poetic and a spiritual legacy. In it, highly evocative tableaux alternate with moments of interiority. It is marked by Marguerite's special skill for moving naturally and without any real change in style from the most concrete details to the lyricism of a free meditation on Scripture, or to the expression of an inner experience on the threshold of the loss of self in union with God. The strong symbolism linking the *MAP*, the queen's first published work, and the *MJCC*, published shortly

appeared. The only other copy is in the library of the University of Berne (fonds Bongars). The 1556 edition is held by the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (Paris).

⁹⁷ Marginal note: “Heb. 12.”

⁹⁸ Pierre Olivier, dedication to Marguerite de France, *Art et usage*, fols. A2v–A3r.

after her death, invites us to see her religious writing as forming a coherent whole, as Gary Ferguson has suggested:

The *œuvre* that opened with the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* closes with the *Miroir de Jésus Christ crucifié*. In this work, perhaps Marguerite's last, we see the fulfilment of a pilgrimage: the journey of the individual towards Christ that nears its goal. It is a journey of justification to which all Christians are called, a journey mirrored in poetry. (*Mirroring Belief*, p. 75)

For his part, Robert Cottrell goes so far as to propose that, placed under the sign of specularity, Marguerite's poetic work acquires a closed structure, with an end that leads back to its beginning (*Grammar*, pp. 123–24). These readings, which have deepened our understanding of the queen's religious poetry, raise two related questions concerning, first, the connections between the two *Miroirs* and, second, the doctrinal position expressed in Marguerite's last poem.

The idea of comparing the two *Miroirs* occurred already to Brother Pierre Olivier. In the dedication of his *Mirouer du chrestien et moyen de congnoistre dieu et soimesme* to Mme de Brissac, he declares that he composed his work to enable the “plus ample et parfaite intelligence” of the queen's last poem “et plus encore de l'autre livre d'icelle, qui est inscrit, le mirouer de l'ame pecheresse” (p. A2v). However, this claim is far from confirmed by a reading of his treatise, which demonstrates the necessity of knowing both God and oneself, and describes the three mirrors by which this can be accomplished: the mirror of the created world (the Book of Nature); the mirror of the Word of God (the Law and Scripture), which reveals man's sin; and the mirror of grace, a summation of the other two, which, by the contemplation of Christ, “vray et souverain mirouer,” transforms man into a new creation.⁹⁹ Without being in actual disagreement with Marguerite's two *Miroirs*, Olivier's treatise never alludes to them in any way. It thus offers neither a commentary on these works nor a means of better understanding the connections between them. If the Domini-can thought it important to mention the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, perhaps he did so simply to create the impression that a poem sometimes

⁹⁹ Gary Ferguson shows that Olivier's text reflects the notion of the great Ages of Nature, Law, and Grace found commonly in devotional writing of the period, especially of “Catholic and Evangelical” persuasion (cf. Erasmus, for example), marked by the idea of “man's progression through an historical and soteriological framework.” This same notion is found to a much lesser extent in Protestant writing, marked rather by “its intense subjectivity” and pessimism about man's nature. See Ferguson, “Now in a glass darkly.”

suspected of heresy was in fact in the same perfectly orthodox devotional tradition as the queen's second *Miroir*—and as his own treatise.

Considering the two *Miroirs* side by side yields few immediate insights. The points of similarity seem limited to some general themes, such as the soul as a captive of sin (the expression “âme pecheresse” appears in the *MJCC*, v. 783), the redemptive nature of Christ's passion, or the affirmation “au seul Dieu tout honneur et gloire” (1 Tim.). The first *Miroir* expands theologically on the means by which the soul may find freedom and on divine forgiveness based on justification by faith and the gift of grace, through an exploration of the mystical relationships between the soul and God. By contrast, the second *Miroir* takes the devotional path of meditation on the crucifix, without engaging with any of the sensitive theological issues of the day, making it difficult to assign a clear doctrinal position to the work. Indeed it is for this reason that it has been possible to present the *MJCC* from divergent perspectives. As we have seen, Guyon Boudeville, its publisher in 1552 whose sympathies lay with the Reformation, filled the margins of the work with biblical references (nearly 700 in all). These are sometimes self-evident, as when they refer to passages of the gospels or biblical episodes to which the poem alludes. Frequently, however, their connection to Marguerite's text is much more tenuous, reflecting a particular choice. Two passages from Saint Paul, for example, one from Romans 3—on the inadequacy of the Law and justification by faith—the other from Ephesians 1—on salvation by Christ—are noted in the margin next to vv. 320–22:

O la bonté, qui tout mon mal surmonte
Pour moy tu rends mon compte et prends ma debte,
Et le profit est mien de ta recepte.¹⁰⁰

These lines, recalling simply the principle of redemption recognized by all Christians, take on a different resonance when presented in terms of a doctrine of justification about which Catholics and Protestants were in disagreement. The Boudeville edition contains over 180 references to the Epistles of Saint Paul and the biblical culture it reflects is more bookish, more systematic, and above all more insistent than that of Marguerite.

Pierre Olivier's edition adopts a quite different perspective. Its marginal biblical references are less numerous and more neutral than those of Boudeville; on the other hand, it exploits more fully the liminary material.

¹⁰⁰ *Le Mirouer de Jesus Christ crucifié* (Toulouse, Boudeville, 1552), p. 17.

Olivier's "Epistre contenant l'argument du present traicté," for example, takes the liberty of fleshing out Marguerite's poem in its own terms. Whereas the *MJCC* simply sets the believer face to face with Christ, Olivier's "argument" stresses the role of the "patrons et exemples" who prepared the way for the working of Christ-as-mirror: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, "et tous les autres fideles saints et saintes" (*Mirouer du Chrestien*, fol. 6v). As noted earlier, Brother Pierre also revised the text slightly; he did so not only to render it more flowing and easier to read, but also tone down a number of particular points. For example, when man is accused, as a result of sin, of having "*changé nature, / perdant le bien d'estre à son dieu semblable / estant du tout converti en vray diable*," Olivier prefers to present man as having merely "*souillé nature, / Perdant le bien d'estre à Dieu fort semblable, / Estant pareil au sathan et diable*" (*MJCC*, vv. 83–86). Likewise, in the final moments of ecstasy, the "baiser délectable" is replaced by a "baptiser" (v. 1339), more in keeping with the familiar catechism. The meaning is not fundamentally altered, but the signs of the individual subject's engagement in the discourse are attenuated. For Pierre Olivier, Marguerite was not a mystic absorbed in a dialogue with the divine; she was a believer moved by charity to offer an example to her fellow Christians.

The way in which the *MJCC* was made to serve ends that were not its own is all the more striking as the poem expresses the freedom of thought and of composition that the queen had acquired at the end of her life. Gary Ferguson is right to note how in this poem her allegorical writing reveals a natural agility and profusion, fed by her deep knowledge of Scripture and of the patristic tradition, devoid of any didacticism.¹⁰¹ Drawing on memory and on her experience as a believer, Marguerite reconnected, in her last *Miroir*, with an ancient devotional tradition of the Church, removed from the theological conflicts of her day, faithful to the spirit of the sermons of Saint Augustine, the meditations of Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure, the *Esquillon d'amour divin* translated by Jean Gerson,¹⁰² and Ludolph the Carthusian's *Vita Christi*.¹⁰³ Does this mean she had given up speaking as a committed Evangelical, as she did in her first *Miroir*?

¹⁰¹ In *MJCC*, "Marguerite's poetry modulates easily from one image to another, carrying the reader with it, pointing out sights on a scriptural and patristic landscape," Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, p. 204.

¹⁰² The *Stimulus amoris* was attributed to Saint Bonaventure at the time.

¹⁰³ A wide selection of these texts was available in the royal library at Blois. See Henri Omont, *La Librairie royale à Blois, Fontainebleau et Paris au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1908). These sources are examined in the forthcoming edition of the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*.

The Miroirs as a Mirror of the “Language of the Evangelical Village”

Marguerite’s first published poem is part of the orchestrated writing project undertaken by the “Navarrian network.” The “language of the evangelical village” comprises a body of lexical signs, stylistic procedures, and common motifs that are the foundation of the Evangelicals’ linguistic complicity. Sharing the same ideological project of religious renewal, they forged as a group an idiolect whose concerted use in works of edification was intended as a discrete form of propaganda, countering the obscurantism of the Sorbonne in the 1520s.¹⁰⁴ The privileged instrument of this complicity, carrying a remarkable richness of expression, was the application of common adjectives like *seul*, *vif*, *vrai*, or *humain* to key theological nouns such as *Dieu*, *foi*, *doctrine*, *tradition*. The nominal groups formed in this way—*seul Dieu*, *vive foi*, *vraie doctrine*, *tradition humaine*—allowed Evangelicals to shape their discourse to avoid censure, at the same time distinguishing it both from Lutheran writing and from scholastic theology. While it would be incorrect to call this a secret language, it constituted nonetheless a linguistic code, whose various elements correspond to identifiable doctrinal positions, distinguished both from those of the conservatives and those of the more radical reformers.¹⁰⁵ A number of examples will serve not only to confirm that the *MAP* was part of this theological and linguistic strategy of the “Navarrian network” but to show that the *MJCC* uses it also.

As the first publication of the head of the “Navarrian network,” the *MAP* is fully engaged in the promotion of a new understanding of death. The *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and Marot’s *Déploration* had already introduced the idea of “mort vivifiante,”¹⁰⁶ quite at odds with medieval theology.¹⁰⁷ Marguerite was nourished by Saint Paul (especially 1 Cor. 15:26), formed by Briçonnet (“*morte est la mort causant division regnant depuis Adam*”),¹⁰⁸ and a privileged reader of the texts produced by the

¹⁰⁴ See Garnier-Mathez, *L’Épithète*. The Evangelicals functioned like a “village” in the sociological sense of the term, that is, a community knit together by specific linguistic practices whose implications might be perceptible only to its members. This approach to 16th-century texts is based on theoretical tools borrowed from the methods of Harold Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology, in particular his notion of *membership*.

¹⁰⁵ See Garnier-Mathez, *L’Épithète*, esp. pp. 170–97.

¹⁰⁶ Briçonnet–Marguerite, *Correspondance*, 1:28: “on parvient à mort vivifiante, et toutesfois mortifiant la vie, en vivant on meurt et en mourant on vit.”

¹⁰⁷ See Claude Blum, *La Représentation de la mort dans la littérature française du XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1989).

¹⁰⁸ *Correspondance*, 2:232.

network (“*par mort a esté la mort morte; en la mort d’icelluy doulx saulveur, absorbée et commuée en vie*”).¹⁰⁹ As such, in her first *Miroir*, she develops the motif of the death of death, already present in the *Dialogue*:

Estre tousjours avecques vous en croix,
Où vous avéz cloué, comme je crois,
Et rendu *mortz la Mort*, et tout peché. (*MAP*, vv. 109–11)¹¹⁰

Almost two decades later, we find the same profession of faith, expressed in identical terms in the second *Miroir*:

tu as la mort randue en morant morte,
quant l’on pensoit ta puissance moins forte;
l’amer morceau feuz de ceste mordante,
qui te mordant a eu mort evidente:
son esguillon contre toy rien n’a peu,
mais te cuydant rompre a esté rompu;
et plus semblois prochain du mortel port,
plus en mourant randois morte la mort. (*MJCC*, vv. 877–84)

The paradoxical celebration of the beauty of death in the *Oraison* that concludes the *MAP* declares the ultimate transformation of the soul, with God “la deifiant et conformant à sa divinité, qui est perfection”:¹¹¹

O mon vray DIEU, que ceste mort est belle,
Par qui j’auray fin de toute querelle:
Par qui j’auray de vous fruition
Et jouiray de vostre vision:
Par qui seray à vous sy conformée
Que j’y seray divine transformée. (*MAP*, vv. 1081–86)¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *Le Traicté du Souverain Bien*, fols. e7r–v.

¹¹⁰ See also:

Vie sans fin a faict nostre mort vive.
Mort a donné à vie mort neïvfe.
Par ceste mort, moy morte reçoïe vie:
Et au vivant par la mort suis ravie.
En vous je vy, quand à moy je suis morte.
Mort ne m’est plus que d’une prison porte.
Vie m’est mort, car par mort suis vivante. (*MAP*, vv. 885–92)

¹¹¹ Briçonnet–Marguerite, *Correspondance*, 1103.

¹¹² From edition E onward, the prologue of the *MAP* echoes vv. 1085–86:

Ainsi le don que liberalement
Le Createur donne au commencement
N’ha nul repos, qu’il n’ayt deïfié
Celuy qui s’est par Foy en DIEU fié.

The final pair of rhyming words reappears in the *MJCC* to describe Mary, God's "parfaicte mere," the model of the Christian, the first to be deified:

Amour en toy l'avoit tant conformée,
qu'en crucifix, elle estoit transformée,
estant sus piedz eslevée par foy,
que la randoit ferme et semblable à toy. (*MJCC*, vv. 197–200)

Marguerite's last work thus testifies to her fidelity to the same sources of inspiration, since she was introduced to this mystery by Guillaume Briçonnet and Lefèvre d'Étaples, both of whom were imbued with the Greek Fathers, Nicholas of Cusa, and Pico della Mirandola. Other indications in the text point to a similar continuing fidelity.

In evangelical publications, *Dieu seul* has the role of a divine name, taking its place among Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *Divina nomina*, a work edited by Lefèvre d'Étaples in 1498. The epithet *seul(e)*, omnipresent in the texts of the network, is intended less to exclude the cult of the saints than to focus the Christian on the essential One.¹¹³ It is part of a technique of didactic repetition designed to keep the sinner's attention directed toward "JESUS CHRIST des ames vray pescheur, / Et *seul Sauveur*" (*MAP*, vv. 1164–65):

Faictes place à ce frere tant doulx,
Et que *luy seul* soit enfermé en vous:
Sans qu'aulture nom jamais y tienne lieu,
Fors *JESUS seul*, mon frere, filz de DIEU. (*MAP*, vv. 359–62)

The repetition of the adjective *seul* is present throughout the entirety of the poem, underscoring a complete confidence in God, the Christian's unique model:¹¹⁴

Foy et amour m'en donnent oubliance,
Mettant du tout en *vous seul* ma fiance. (*MAP*, vv. 377–78)

Mais par amour, qui est en vous si ample,
Icy estes *seul*, et *parfait* exemple. (*MAP*, vv. 605–06)

The rhyme *déifié* / *fié* was used in the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* (vv. 145 and 147); the term *deifiée* also appeared in v. 884 of the earliest editions of the *MAP*, as noted above.

¹¹³ See Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète*, pp. 125–55.

¹¹⁴ Reformed Christians used similar kinds of repetition in their texts.

The *MJCC* has recourse to the same attribute of evangelical writing as an aid to meditation, especially in a double anaphora “toy seul / à toy seul veulx”:

toy seul peultz dire: “Attollite portas”,
 toy seul du ciel ouvert le seul port as.
 Viens, forte main, la miene foible prandre,
 car à toy seul la veulx lever et tendre:
 à nul seigneur ne feray de mon fief
 hommaige, fors à mon crucifié;
 à toy seul veulx les mains de mon cueur joindre. (*MJCC*, vv. 697–703)

A number of variants of the two *Miroirs* also point to the didactic function of the repetition of “seul” in expressions relating to God: by way of example, “Que de luy seul” replaces “Riens, que de luy”¹¹⁵ in the first *Miroir*; “Dieu seul” is substituted for “hault Dieu”¹¹⁶ in the second.

If salvation comes from “Dieu seul,” through “la seule bonne grace / Du tout puissant” (*MAP*, vv. 69–70), for Evangelicals, unlike Reformed Christians, it is gained not by “la seule foi” but by “vive foi.”¹¹⁷ The change of epithet in French marks a specific theological orientation, distinct from both the scholastic *fides charitate formata*¹¹⁸ and the Lutheran *sola fides*. Highlighted from as early as the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*,¹¹⁹ as it is professed by Marguerite and her evangelical brethren, “ceste foy est une foy vive qui œuvre par charité,”¹²⁰ that is, it is radiant with the

¹¹⁵ *MAP*, v. 1174, a variant found in the edition of the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses* (1547).

¹¹⁶ *MJCC*, v. 204, a variant found in P2.

¹¹⁷ The emblematic lines of Marot’s *Deploration sur le trespas de messire Florimond Robertet* clearly proclaim: “Prie à Dieu seul que par grâce te donne / La vive Foy, dont Saint Paul tant escrit” (*Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Defaux, 1:216, vv. 325–26). On the linguistic formulae used to express different theological positions in relation to the relative roles of faith and works in the process of salvation (*vive foi, foi formée, foi œuvrant par charité*, etc.), see Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 147–78.

¹¹⁸ Francis Higman reminds us that this expression “démontre nettement les confessions. Pour le catholique, la charité donne *forme*, corps, à la foi, et est donc en quelque sorte antérieure à la foi. Pour le réformé, la foi est la source de tout, y compris la charité chrétienne,” *La diffusion de la Réforme en France, 1520–1565* (Geneva, 1992), p. 59. Gary Ferguson notes that the expression was used by conservatives, for whom the predominance of charity was a tool to fight Lutheran heresy (*Mirroring Belief*, p. 149).

¹¹⁹ “Et que *par foy* le cueur soit à Dieu joint, / J’entens *vive*: c’est le don que Dieu baille,” *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, vv. 1090–91.

¹²⁰ Lefèvre d’Étaples and his disciples, *Épistres et Évangiles pour les cinquante et deux semaines de l’an*, ed. G. Bedouelle and F. Giaccone (Leiden, 1976), p. 359. The expression “faith working through love [charity]” comes from Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians 5:6.

love of God shown in tangible acts of charity toward one's neighbor. If Reformed and evangelical Christians have recourse to the same Scriptural reference,¹²¹ the latter, instead of stressing the exclusion of works from the process of salvation, insist rather that charity is born of authentic faith, as Marguerite explains at the end of the first *Miroir*, in eight lines that sum up the poem's theological message:

Foy donne espoir par seure Verité,
 Qui engendre parfaite Charité.
 Et Charité est DIEU comme sçavons. 1. Jehan. 4
 Si en nous est, DIEU aussi nous avons.
 Il est en nous, et trestous en luy sommes.
 Tous sont en luy, et luy en tous les hommes:
 Si nous l'avons par Foy, tel est l'avoir,
 Que le dire n'est en nostre pouvoir. (*MAP*, vv. 1415–22)

We see, then, that *vive foy* is a living faith, generative of works not because they are necessary in the process of justification, but as a result of the outflowing of charity, as well as a faith that brings life, that vivifies man and leads him to salvation. In this way *vive foy* can be understood as a metaphor of the transformation of the Old Adam into the New. Although the expression “vieil Adam,” common in evangelical discourse, is not found in the first *Miroir*, it is frequent in the second.¹²² The syntagma *vive foy* thus becomes the concrete term expressing the abstract reality of justification, without implying the need for works in the process of salvation: it is *vive foy* that justifies even the penitent thief crucified alongside Christ, although he has performed no works. Faith alone (*seule*), by its nature living (*vive*), saves the Christian.¹²³

Two passages from the *MAP* elucidate this mystery. The first (vv. 792–802) was quoted above. The calming effect on a tormented soul of the experience of “une si vive Foy” (v. 797) offers a foretaste of salvation: “Par vraye amour senty ma paour estaincte” (v. 800). The consubstantiality of faith and divine love—faith given by God's love—is reinforced by a change in the text that appears starting with the C edition, attributed to

¹²¹ “Le juste vit de foy.” This phrase from the prophet Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted by Saint Paul, Rom. 1:17: “Car la justice de dieu est révélée en icelle de foy en foy, ainsi qu’il est escript, Le juste vit de foy,” *Nouveau Testament*, trans. Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (Paris, Simon de Colines, 1523).

¹²² See vv. 64, 1057, and 1288.

¹²³ To avoid any inaccurate and dangerous association with Lutheran doctrine, the Evangelicals were careful to replace the expression *sola fides* with *vive foy* in their translations of Luther's works. See Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète*, pp. 298–305.

Augereau.¹²⁴ In place of love described as “vray et vivant,” as it was in the Du Bois editions, the later versions add a pair of words central to evangelical writing about faith:

Où est *amour vraye et vive* sans faincte,
Il ne souvient de paour, douleur, ne crainte. (vv. 1047–48)

This substitution calls to mind, for a reader familiar with evangelical writings, *vraye et vive foy* radiant with *charité*. Such a reader pays heed to those who

annuncent simplement et purement le saint evangile, incitans et admonestans tous à vivre selon la parolle de nostre seigneur en *vraye et vive foy* laquelle produysse et face vray fruit de *charité* qui sont les seules œuvres qui plaisent à dieu et qu'on peut nommer bonnes.¹²⁵

The substitution can also be understood as an act of resistance by Marguerite in the *MAP* of 1533, directed against those willing to compromise with the conservatives and who, from 1529 on, published numerous editions of the *Livre de vraye et parfaicte oraison*, a catechetical treatise based on evangelical texts carefully toned down to avoid giving offense. In an attempt to render *vive foi* more orthodox and to mitigate the theology of justification than underlies it, they replaced it with the expression *foy vivante*.¹²⁶

The centrality of the theology of *vive foi* can be seen in the poetics Marguerite uses in the *MAP*. It depends on the persuasive force of the epithet *vive*, its qualifying resonance within a variety of figures of speech: paronomasia, “la *vive voix* de DIEU” (v. 531), behind which lies the Pauline intertext, “la parole de Dieu est vive” (Heb. 4:12); emphasis, “par vive connaissance / De [s]on peché” (vv. 791–92), which indicates, by implication, that the soul is opening up to the action of *vive foi*.¹²⁷ Finally, and above

¹²⁴ For the association of *vive foi* and charity, see also Marguerite's *Pater noster*, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:152, vv. 170–73.

¹²⁵ *Exhortation sur ces saintes parolles de nostre seigneur Jesus*, fol. B(6)r. The emblematic expression *vraye et vive foy* was used occasionally by Calvin in the *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, but also by moderate Evangelicals like Jean Bouchet or François Habert. For other examples (like Farel's *Pater noster et le Credo en françoys* of 1524), see Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète*, pp. 159–64.

¹²⁶ Despite the work's considerable success (13 editions by 1545), the anonymous author's lexical innovation did not attract imitators. See Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète*, pp. 308–10.

¹²⁷ The epithet is part of a veritable poetics of concentration at the heart of evangelical discourse. See Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète*, pp. 193–95.

all, it is with this expression that Marguerite closes the “prologue aux lecteurs,” added beginning with the last Augereau edition in 1533 (E):

Mais vous, Lecteurs de bonne conscience,
Je vous requiers, prenez la patience
Lire du tout ceste œuvre qui n'est rien,
Et n'en prenez seulement que le bien.
Mais priez DIEU, plein de bonté naïve,
Qu'en vostre cuer il plante la *Foy vive*. (vv. 27–32)

The expression “Foy vive,” marking the culmination of the prologue and signaling the persuasive strength, the lively energy, the queen directs toward her readers, is rooted in the memory from the outset of the poem like a tangible manifestation of divine grace. By exhorting God to “plant” living faith in the heart of the reader, Marguerite also activates the vegetal metaphor that opens the *MAP*. It is equally in a metaphoric passage that we find the only use of *vive foy* in the second *Miroir*.¹²⁸ Here it represents the means by which the Christian receives the spiritual revelation of the Church springing from the wounded side of Christ.¹²⁹ Living faith, raising the heart from a contemplation limited by the senses to a spiritual vision, opens the soul to the sacred mysteries. Seen in this light, the *MJCC* can be read as an exhortation to allow oneself to be seized by the active force of the same “si vive foy” experienced in the *MAP* in order to complete the transformation of the soul in God.

¹²⁸ Commenting on the passage in the *MJCC* which takes up the traditional analogy between Christ and David victorious over Goliath, Gary Ferguson notes that this verifies the tendency, shown by Marguerite in her later works, to speak of salvation by faith formed by charity only with respect to Christ, not mankind, which the critic suggests reveals a more marked influence of Reformed ideas. See Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 176–77: “faith working through charity is no longer seen as the means whereby man may come to God and work out his salvation, rather it is the means whereby God himself in Christ has come close to man, and works out his salvation for him”:

O ferme foy, par charité ouvrante,
c'est toy qui es la pierre delivrante
au nom de Dieu, duquel, le jeune enfant,
nud comme ver, rencontre ung elephant
s'est defandu par si grande vertu. (*MJCC*, vv. 1270–74)

While the passage does indeed lend itself to such an interpretation, the reader remains free to understand it differently, confirming the queen's decision to avoid dispute and her simple desire to spread what most stirred her own devotion.

¹²⁹ See vv. 1045–54, cited above:

Regarde icy dedans ce costé dextre,
par vive foy de l'arche la fenestre,
par qui du sein paternel à nous tombe,
la purifique et tresblanche colombe.

Conclusion

At the end of this analysis, we can note multiple and diverse points of resemblance between Marguerite's two *Miroirs*. These allow us to see the poet's commitment to introspection, the necessary first step for any Christian who seeks to progress along the path of faith, following the divine model, whether this is reflected in Scripture or made manifest through contemplation of the crucified Christ. They bear witness to the popularity during the Renaissance of a genre inherited from medieval religious literature, still appreciated by conservative Christians but also capable of attracting those following different, even contrasting, religious paths from those recommended by traditional piety—Evangelicals and Reformed Christians. They bear witness to the enduring character of the queen of Navarre's inspiration, her remarkable fidelity to the spiritual sources that nourished her faith from the trials of the early years and throughout her life—the precepts of Guillaume Briçonnet and the teachings of Saint Paul—manifest both in the biblical intertext and the evangelical language that characterize both works in different but nonetheless related ways. At the same time, this series of similarities does not detract from the uniqueness of each poem, both profoundly inscribed in a particular watershed moment of Marguerite's life. The *MAP*, the first of the long chain of the queen's publications, is above all a militant text, turned toward action. It represents the personal action of the author, playing a role in the society of her time by witnessing to her faith. It represents the action of the spokesperson for the evangelical network taking a position on controversial theological issues—the long poem doing this with no less splash than a public debate. Finally, it represents the author's action with respect to her brothers and sisters in the faith, fellow Christians whom she protected, supported, and encouraged, by exposing herself, despite all the editorial precautions taken, to the attacks of zealous censors. In the *MJCC*, we find none of this. If this work is no less haunted by the idea of sin, the perspective has changed. On the threshold of death, with her royal brother gone, Marguerite is no longer seeking to galvanize a militant community, of whose current adversities she is all too aware. She places herself once again under God's all-seeing eye, but now to prepare to face him at the end. If we sought another of the queen's works close in spirit to the *MJCC*, we might turn to the *Petit Œuvre dévot*, the allegorical representation of a pilgrim making her way to God, inspired by medieval mystical models.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ See *Pater Noster et Petit Œuvre dévot*, pp. 61–80.

For, after the stoic Evangelism of the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*¹³¹ and the militant Evangelism of the *MAP*, Marguerite's second *Miroir* returns to the Christ-centered piety of this youthful text, in a similar display of trust and self-abandonment before "ceste croix par grant devotion."¹³² But in the *MJCC*, the experience of Christ as the ultimate reality all but coincides with the experience of the final moments of the queen's life. The poem is thus also a treatise on the preparation for death in the tradition of the *ars moriendi*. And since the moment of death came too soon for the author to be able to express fully the meaning of her work, it remains in many ways mysterious and open to multiple interpretations, despite the laudable attempts of posthumous editors to elucidate it. It is the mystery surrounding this final manuscript of the first woman of letters in France to be published during her lifetime that gives a special value to this *Miroir*, a mirror of Marguerite's work as a whole.

¹³¹ See Jean Lecointe, "Le Devis des larmes: polémique anti-stoïcienne et dialogicité, autour de *La Navire* de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Devis d'amitié: Mélanges en l'honneur de Nicole Cazauran*, ed. J. Lecointe, C. Magnien, I. Pantin, and M.-C. Thomine (Paris, 2002), pp. 369–84.

¹³² *Petit Œuvre dévot*, p. 104, v. 591; the poem's last tercet contains a message analogous to that of the *MJCC*: "Et ceste croix par grant devotion / Rememorant sa dure passion / En nostre cuer ayons nunc et semper."

SPEAKING WITH THE DEAD: SPIRITUALITY, MOURNING,
AND MEMORY IN THE *DIALOGUE EN FORME DE VISION NOCTURNE*
AND *LA NAVIRE*

Reinier Leushuis

Introduction

Among Marguerite de Navarre's spiritual poetry the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* (hereafter *Dialogue*) and *La Navire* are distinguished by a unique dialogism that is both formal (they feature an exchange of replies between two speakers) and thematic (their spiritual content is generated in a dialogical pattern). The *Dialogue*, Marguerite's first major poetic production, emerges from the spiritual and dialogical symbiosis of minds that she, then still duchess of Alençon, experienced with Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux, during four years of intense mystical correspondence. In a letter dated October 1524, the second to last of the more than 120 they exchanged, Marguerite submits to Briçonnet's judgment a short piece of her writing that critics believe to have been a draft of the *Dialogue*:¹

Et si Dieu veult que quelque chose commencée soit finée, bien que mal et mauvais langage, vous en auriez le pouvoir de correction, où vous voirrez le debat que me faictes avant l'avoir veu estre, non si bien mais suivant vostre propos, comme si en pareil temps l'Esperit avoit aux deux parlé.²

¹ See Christine Martineau and Christian Grouselle, "La Source première et directe du *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*: la lettre de Guillaume Briçonnet à Marguerite de Navarre, du 15 septembre 1524," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 32 (1970), 559–77, and Marguerite de Navarre, *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, ed. Renja Salminen, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, Series B, 227 (Helsinki, 1985), "Introduction," pp. 14–18. Earlier groundwork for the dating of the *Dialogue* was done by Pierre Jourda, "Sur la date du *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*," *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 13 (1926), 150–61, and Carlo Pellegrini, *La prima opera di Margherita di Navarra e la terza rima in Francia* (Catania, 1920), pp. 5–30. More recently, Franco Giaccone has questioned the dating and suggested that Marguerite was alluding rather to the short and somewhat dialogical *Pater Noster*, of which Giaccone provided the first critical edition, "Le premier ouvrage de Marguerite de Navarre: *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* ou *Pater noster*?", in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992: Actes du Colloque international de Pau, 1992*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan, 1995; Paris, 2006), pp. 261–89. See also Hans Sckommodau, *Die religiösen Dichtungen Margaretes von Navarra* (Cologne, 1955), pp. 47–87.

² Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79), 2:292.

In the previous month, Briçonnet had sought to console Marguerite in an expansive epistle centered on the joyful freedom found when death liberates the body from its terrestrial prison and allows the spirit to join Christ, its spouse, in a *unio mystica*. The occasion was the death of Marguerite de Navarre's eight-year-old niece Charlotte, on 8 September 1524, and the state of extreme sorrow the duchess experienced as a result. This letter and a previous one on the death of Charlotte's mother, Claude de France, earlier that summer epitomize the bishop's remedial role in the correspondence as Marguerite's spiritual guide and mentor, his advice being focused at this point mainly on her grief and mourning. The effect of Briçonnet's letters can be measured in Marguerite's comment that precedes the passage quoted above: "Mais que vous diray je de l'espouze dormant entre les bras de son vray amy?" Her reference to Charlotte as the spouse of the Song of Songs sleeping peacefully in the arms of Christ, her true lover, reiterates an image that Briçonnet had often used to convince Marguerite of the bliss of the celestial realm, and shows that the duchess had reached a state of resignation with regard to Charlotte's bodily death.

Marguerite's impulse to start writing poetry and her wish to have it appraised by Briçonnet in this context of, on the one hand, loss and grief, and, on the other hand, consolatory letter writing, suggest that she desired to imitate in a poetic text the exercise in mourning represented by the epistolary exchange with Briçonnet. In so doing, she follows Briçonnet's rhetorical strategy of refiguring biblical imagery from the terrestrial to the spiritual realm, as in the example from the Song of Songs. More importantly, the *Dialogue*'s dialogical exchange of spiritually transcendent language, with the mentor-like authoritative figure of Charlotte, mimes the epistolary exchange with Briçonnet and the spiritual communion it had generated ("le *debat* que me faictes avant l'avoir veu estre, . . . comme si en pareil temps l'Esperit avoit aux deux parlé").

The queen of Navarre's poetic œuvre would eventually encompass a myriad of forms and spiritual and worldly themes. However, one of her final poems, *La Navire*, represents a striking return to a similar poetic form and dialogical pattern in order to deal with the loss of her brother, King François I. The poem stages François's spirit as a consoling but authoritative interlocutor, who encourages his sister to overcome her carnal sorrow by refiguring earthly life at a spiritual level. Although written almost a quarter of a century after the *Dialogue*, *La Navire* presents conspicuous formal and thematic resemblances with the earlier work, including its use of a *terza rima* rhyme scheme, the fiction of the vision, and its dialogical

structure, which not only mimes the voices of Marguerite and the spirit of her brother, but also effectively creates a larger dialectic between the carnal and the spiritual realms.

Even though the two poems stand far apart in Marguerite's literary career, their textual similarities, many of which have been noted in varying degrees by critics, justify a combined examination.³ First, their analogies set them apart from other spiritual poetry composed by Marguerite. The *terza rima*, for example, is employed in very few other texts, the only examples being the *Petit Œuvre*, written around the same time as the *Dialogue*, and a few passages from *La Coche*. Second, even if some of Marguerite's spiritual poetry (in particular the *Chansons spirituelles*) displays traces of dialogism, nowhere else are two voices staged in such a powerful mimetic exchange. In this respect, they bring to mind Marguerite's theatrical plays, which also often present multiple voices in versified discourse with little dramatic action.⁴ Third, both poems are inextricably linked to comparable mystical experiences in a time of mourning. Robert Marichal suggests that Marguerite may well have reread her *Dialogue* after François's death in order to relive her past sorrow and reexperience the exercise of consolation guided by the voice of Charlotte.⁵ It is not impossible that she conceived both poems as private poetic experiences. Despite the significant amount of doctrinal matter they contain, they function as introspective self-examinations in the face of death. As such, they are exercises in working through loss and grief that can potentially be repeated over time. They are, consequently, much less reader-oriented

³ Among other critics proposing a combined critical reading of these two works, see Skkommodau, *Die religiösen Dichtungen*, pp. 63–87; Paula Sommers, "La Navire et le Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne: dilemmes corporels," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, pp. 351–64; Nicole Cazauran, "Marguerite de Navarre: le deuil en dialogues," in *Cité des hommes, cité de Dieu: Travaux sur la littérature de la Renaissance en l'honneur de Daniel Ménager*, ed. Jean Céard, Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud, Michel Magnien, and François Rouget (Geneva, 2003), pp. 343–57; and Marguerite de Navarre, *La Navire ou Consolation du roi François I^{er} à sa sœur Marguerite*, ed. Robert Marichal (Paris, 1956), "Introduction," pp. 9–16.

⁴ The *Dialogue* and *La Navire* are often included in dialogue studies as canonical examples of early modern French dialogue production. On the *Dialogue*, see Eva Kushner, *Le dialogue à la Renaissance: Histoire et poétique* (Geneva, 2004), pp. 90, 117–19, 263–67, 288–89, and Mustapha Kemal Bénouis, *Le Dialogue philosophique dans la littérature française du seizième siècle* (The Hague and Paris, 1976), p. 214. On *La Navire*, see Colette Winn, "Toward a Dialectic of Reconciliation: The *Navire* and the *Heptameron* of Marguerite de Navarre," in *The Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547–1630: Art and Argument*, ed. Colette H. Winn (Washington, D.C., 1993), pp. 79–120.

⁵ Marichal, ed. *La Navire*, p. 11.

than the rest of Marguerite's poetic works, in spite of the similarity in spiritual themes.

In the first part of this essay, I will approach the texts from the twofold perspective first of literary history and form, then of spiritual and religious thematics. I will examine their unique shared formal characteristics: the *terza rima* rhyme, the dialogical structure, and their status as visions staging an encounter with a deceased family member. I will show how these formal aspects are rooted in late medieval and early Renaissance poetic traditions of loss and mourning, but I will also point out their originality and innovation. Next I will examine the poems within the larger thematic context of spiritual and evangelical renewal in France in the early decades of the 16th century, in particular as it is related to Marguerite's correspondence with Briçonnet. In the second part of the essay, I will offer an interpretation of the poems, exploring both the larger dialogical opposition between carnal and spiritual that they stage and the role of the senses, voice, and speech in these dynamics. In this context, I will trace the poetic and humanistic influence of two works by Petrarch (his *Secretum* and *Triumphus Mortis*) and emphasize the crucial role of memory, in particular in *La Navire*. In general, I will argue that these texts' poetic and dialogical aspects mime Marguerite's concerns with Christian self-consciousness and human agency in three intersecting thematic domains: the painful experience of loss and mourning; the desire for spiritual transcendence (with the dual goal of reconnecting with the lost beloved and reaching a state of bliss); and, especially in *La Navire*, the workings of memory and remembrance in the confrontation with mortality.

I. *Poetic Dialogue: Literary Form and Spirituality*

From Lived Experience to Poetic Text

The narrative structures of the *Dialogue* and *La Navire* are simple but fluid. In the first poem, Marguerite is in a pitiful state of silent mourning when she suddenly recognizes her niece Charlotte approaching to dry her tears with a handkerchief. Marguerite expresses deep sorrow over the child's recent death and begs Charlotte to comfort her. Charlotte asks Marguerite to stop her crying and tells her she has found happiness in the celestial realm. Their ensuing dialogue is driven by a dialectic between the worldly and the spiritual realms, by the premise that bodily death is a joyful moment that initiates the life of eternity, and by Charlotte's catechistic lesson that Marguerite can continue living if she abandons herself in

yearning for a *unio mystica* with Christ (of whom Charlotte stages herself as bride), presented as the endpoint of an ascending spiritual journey. The text is loosely structured in a succession of thematic sequences—each one introduced by Marguerite's sometimes rather confrontational questions or inquisitive comments, followed by Charlotte's lengthier replies—dealing with the nature of divine love, charity, and faith; the correct form of prayer; and the theological debate concerning free will, the role of good works, and the conferral of grace. The dialogue remains unresolved and ultimately Charlotte withdraws to the celestial heights, leaving her aunt in spiritual disarray.

La Navire displays an even less organized narrative and thematic sequence. The text starts with a voice that has a powerful sensorial impact on an interlocutor who is later identified as Marguerite. She quickly realizes it is the voice of her deceased brother, François. The ensuing dialogue can be divided roughly into two parts: the first half features exchanges that are more private in nature and pit Marguerite's grief over her brother's bodily loss, her self-centered terrestrial sorrow, and the memory of François's earthly glory against her brother's recurring demands that Marguerite mortify the flesh and abandon her terrestrial affection for the sake of obtaining the divine and self-effacing *caritas* associated with the celestial realm. Instead of moving closer to François, however, Marguerite expresses an increasing attachment to her earthly state of being that allows her to give voice to her personal sorrow through lamenting and the shedding of tears. In the second half of the poem, and in spite of François's disapproval, Marguerite embarks on communal and commemorative speaking: she summons to François's tomb the French people and an array of individual courtly and royal figures, urging them to participate in her tearful grieving and praise of François as sovereign. Finally, François admonishes his sister to awake from her earthly illusions in order to see God and to love her brother in a divine manner. The sun rises and, as François's spirit retreats to heaven, he urges her to remember his words and reminds her that they will soon be reunited in paradise. The poem ends with a prayer by Marguerite in which she thanks the Lord for redeeming her brother and for making her aware of divine truth.

* * *

After its genesis in 1524 from the dialogical exchange with Briçonnet, the *Dialogue* would not appear in print for another nine years. It was published in 1533 by Simon Du Bois, in a volume that also contained the second edition of the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* and a number of other minor

works.⁶ Until that time, the poem existed only in a manuscript copy (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 2371), in which Marguerite is named “Madame la Duchesse” or “Madame L.D.,” while the 1533 printed text refers to her as “la Royne de Navarre” (a title she gained through marriage in 1527). For reasons about which we can only speculate, she decided not to include the *Dialogue* in her first publication, the 1531 edition of the *Miroir de l’âme pécheresse* and the *Discord*; she also excluded it much later from the collected edition of her poetry, the 1547 *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*.⁷

It is tempting to surmise that Marguerite needed time to distance herself from a document that records a tragedy striking so close to her heart. Unlike her brother’s death in 1547, from which she was physically distant, she experienced at close hand the four-week heart-wrenching affliction of her brother’s young child, who died slowly of rubella, finally perishing in her aunt’s arms. The situation was aggravated by the fact that her brother was away on a military campaign in Italy and the queen mother, Louise de Savoie, who acted as regent during the king’s absence, had also fallen ill.⁸ This left Marguerite in charge of state and family matters of the highest urgency, in addition to dealing with her crushing grief. She begs Briçonnet for his prayers (“je demande le secours de voz bonnes prieres”) and tells him she is gripped by extreme sorrow (“en l’extremité de ma follie et larmes”).⁹

The transition between lived experience and the poetic text is difficult to reconstruct, but we know that around this time Marguerite composed four *rondeaux*. Three of these precede the text of the *Dialogue* in the 1533 edition and set up a dialogical question-answer pattern with Charlotte that prefigures the one in the poem (*Madame, à l’ame de feu madame Charlotte; L’ame respond à madame dame; and Replicque de madicte dame à l’ame*).¹⁰ While these dialogical poems are proof of a textual genesis triggered by the model of Briçonnet’s correspondence (as will be explored further below), Marguerite turned to another literary model, Petrarch’s

⁶ See Salminen, ed. *Dialogue*, pp. 5–6; Pierre Jourda, “Avant-propos” to his edition of Marguerite de Navarre, *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 13 (1926), 1; Pierre Jourda, “Tableau chronologique des publications de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 12 (1925), 209–55 (pp. 212–13).

⁷ Pierre Jourda ventures some hypotheses, acknowledging they remain speculative, in *Marguerite d’Angoulême, Duchesse d’Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978), 2:1100.

⁸ Jourda, *Marguerite d’Angoulême*, 1:90–91; Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 13–14.

⁹ *Correspondance*, 2:262; 271.

¹⁰ Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 7–12; Sckommodau, *Die religiösen Dichtungen*, p. 64.

Triumphus Mortis (*Triumph of Death*), to shape the vision of the lost child in its initial stages. Renja Salminen suggests that Marguerite was directed to Petrarch's authoritative poetic model by a dream experience of her brother. In the same letter to Briçonnet in which she announces the death of Charlotte, she also mentions that the king, from whom she had initially hidden the bad news, upon learning of it, told her that the child's voice had sounded up to three times in his dream, saying to him "Adieu, mon Roy, je voy en paradis" (*Correspondance*, 2:272). François's dream may well have directed Marguerite toward the poetic topos of the dream vision, of which she found an explicit example in the third of Petrarch's six *Triumphs*, the *Triumphus Mortis*. Marguerite had access to this text via the copy in the royal library at Blois, that Charles VIII had brought back from his Italian campaign.¹¹ In Petrarch's poem, an allegorical Death appears to the poet and evokes the vanity of all human endeavor and the fleetingness of earthly life. Death then yields to the spirit of Petrarch's deceased beloved, Laura, who appears crowned with jewels and surrounded by celestial spirits and reminds the poet of the soul's blissful state after leaving the prison of the earthly body.

Given the dominant influence of Briçonnet's spirituality on Marguerite's poetry, critics tend to overlook the philological evidence of the first 200 verses of the *Dialogue* (as well as certain passages of *La Navire*)¹² that undoubtedly points to an imitation of the Tuscan master in both content and poetic form. Many images and spiritual themes surrounding death, also recognizable from Briçonnet's theology, are first filtered into the poem via Petrarch's intertext: a short earthly life is a blessing; terrestrial gains are ephemeral; death is a liberation from an earthly prison; the poet's anguished questioning of how long he needs to remain in his earthly sorrow; and the overarching antithesis between spiritual death in earthly life and celestial life following carnal death.¹³

Another important borrowing from Petrarch's *Triumphus* is its use of *terza rima*, which interlinks stanzas of three lines so that each strophe's

¹¹ Ursula Baurmeister and Marie-Pierre Laffitte, *Des livres et des rois: La bibliothèque royale de Blois* (Paris, 1992), p. 134.

¹² Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, 1:372–75, and Renja Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 19–24, point to the influence of the *Triumphus Mortis* and trace Marguerite's faithful imitation of Petrarchan material. In their otherwise insightful studies, Robert Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Spiritual Poetry* (Washington, D.C., 1986), and Paula Sommers, *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry of Spiritual Ascent* (Geneva, 1989), barely mention the Petrarchan intertext.

¹³ For a comparison of specific textual passages, see Salminen, *ibid.*

first line rhymes with its third line and the second line provides the rhyme for the first and third lines of the next strophe (*aba, bcb, cdc*, etc.). It was rarely used in the French Renaissance and had featured previously only in parts of Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Temple d'Honneur et de vertus* (1503) and *La Concorde des deux langages* (1511), as well as in some of Mellin de Saint-Gelais's works.¹⁴ Since *terza rima* is most famous for being the rhyme scheme of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Marguerite's use of this meter led some early critics to see in it the influence of the famous Florentine poet, whose work Marguerite undoubtedly knew and refers to in other works.¹⁵ While direct textual references to the *Commedia* in the *Dialogue* are lacking and the shared characteristics of a vision-shaped spiritual quest are too general to be conclusive, we can nonetheless interpret Marguerite's use of *terza rima* in connection with the spiritual meaning of her poem. As Robert Cottrell argues, *terza rima* reflects the idea of proceeding two steps forward followed by one step backward, and thus mimetically underlines the cumbersome but steady progress the Christian is required to make on the ladder toward spiritual transcendence and divine knowledge (*Grammar*, pp. 53–54). The *Dialogue*, however, displays such an ascent and upward progression only in part, and since Marguerite borrows some of her *terza rima* stanzas almost word for word from Petrarch's *Triumphus Mortis*,¹⁶ this is undoubtedly her immediate poetic model. As I will show below in detail, instead of depicting spiritual ascent, *terza rima*, with its "two steps forward one step backward" motion, reflects Marguerite's laborious mnemonic reconstruction of the lost beloved, whose bodily presence she visually evokes and poetically remembers in a manner similar to Petrarch's evocation of the spirit of Laura.

Other general connections, not anchored in specific textual links and borrowings, can be drawn between the *Dialogue*'s visionary framework and other well-known literary models from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In the first place, there is the model of the *visio*, very close to that

¹⁴ See Leon Kastner, *A History of French Versification* (Oxford, 1903), pp. 167–69 and idem, "History of the *terza rima* in France," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 26 (1904), 241–53.

¹⁵ See Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, 1:373–74.

¹⁶ The stanza describing death as the end of a dark prison is carried over literally. "La morte è fin di una pregione oscura / all'anime gentili; all'altre è noia, / ch'anno posto nel fango ogni lor cura" (Francesco Petrarca, *Rime, Trionfi, e poesie latine*, ed. Francesco Neri [Milan, 1951], pp. 524–25) becomes "La mort est fin d'une prison obscure / A une ame gentil, et bien amere / A qui a mys au monde trop sa cure," vv. 178–80. This and all further quotations from the *Dialogue* are from Salminen ed. cit. All emphasis is my own.

of the *songe*, a dream narrative of an encounter with a spirit, as it was epitomized by the *Somnium scipionis* and applied not only in the *Divina Commedia* and the *Triumphus Mortis*, but also by Christine de Pizan, in her *Avision Christine* and *Livre du chemin de long estude*, and in an array of texts by the *grands rhétoriciens* who specifically used the oneiric framework to praise deceased figures of authority.¹⁷ What renders Marguerite's vision of her niece unusual, however, is that at no point does the narrator make explicit mention of falling asleep, of being in a dream state, or of waking up at the end. In fact, unlike *La Navire*, the *Dialogue* does not even mention a nightly setting. Given its oneiric atmosphere, critics tend to overlook this fact. Yet for a proper appreciation of the poem's spiritual meaning and its dramatization of an oscillation between the carnal and spiritual realms, it is important to see how much Marguerite emphasizes a physical, sensorial, and mnemonic experience of the deceased interlocutor, rather than her intangible presence as a purely fictional dream character.

Likewise, the *Dialogue*'s major dialogical framework, opposing Marguerite's carnal attachments to Charlotte's embodiment of spiritual life, recalls poems from medieval poetic traditions that stage a voiced opposition between two allegorical figures to treat the body vs. soul dichotomy, the so-called *débats* or *discords de l'âme et du corps* (some of which feature an oneiric setting as well).¹⁸ In Marguerite's case, however, the exchange between herself and her interlocutor acquires an intimacy and immediacy that is absent from these medieval texts featuring a succession of speeches by abstract allegorizations of body and soul. Marguerite's *Dialogue* rises above the latter genre's forensic rhetorical nature that usually stages a stifled contest followed by a virtuous Soul emerging in victory at the text's conclusion.

¹⁷ The *Somnium scipionis* is a dream narrative from Cicero's *De republica* in which the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus is foretold his glorious future as a military commander by his grandfather. It was known throughout the Middle Ages thanks to Macrobius's commentary on it. For the use of the dream narrative by the *grands rhétoriciens*, see Marichal, ed. cit., pp. 51–56, and Christine Martineau-Génieys, *Le Thème de la mort dans la poésie française de 1450 à 1550* (Paris, 1978), pp. 224, 227, 312–13, 338, 353–54, 368, 385, and 423. See also Sylviane Bokdam, "La forme du « songe » dans la poésie religieuse au seizième siècle," in *Le Songe à la Renaissance: Colloque international de Cannes (29–31 mai 1987)*, ed. Françoise Charpentier (Saint-Étienne, 1990), pp. 137–49.

¹⁸ Pierre Jourda reminds us that the appeal of these allegorizing dialogue-texts extended far into the 16th century (*Marguerite d'Angoulême*, 1:356–57). For examples from Latin and vernacular traditions, see Michel-André Bossy, "Medieval Debates of Body and Soul," *Comparative Literature* 28 (1976), 144–63.

In Marguerite's text the dialogical dynamic is closely linked to its content since it reflects the believer's troublesome spiritual quest or ambiguous desire for transcendence, rather than serving the moralizing rhetorical purpose of persuading the reader of a spiritual truth or demonstrating the attainment of redemption. It is true that Charlotte's extensive speeches centered on spiritual bliss and theological dogma occupy by far the greatest part of the text (a little under 1000 of the approximately 1300 lines). Charlotte, who at times displays Socratic traits, strikes us as the dominant or "winning" interlocutor, while many of Marguerite's utterances place her in the position of the submissive pupil who expresses her willingness to learn Charlotte's lessons. However, we should not overlook the fact that the dialogical exchange does not conclude Socratically in a climactic attainment of wisdom and that the ending proposes no satisfying outcome or synthesis of voices. Rather, in the manner of a typical humanist dialogue, it remains unresolved and proposes no easy conclusion to the reader, who is left with the impression that the exchange could continue indefinitely.¹⁹ The last line of the poem expresses this unsettled tension when Marguerite complains that Charlotte has left her alive but worse than dead ("Laissée m'a vivante, pis que morte," v. 1260).

As noted above, the dialogical dynamic in the *Dialogue* is born from Marguerite's correspondence with Briçonnet and her experience of it as a sacred communion with a higher authoritative voice. Marguerite's imploring request for Briçonnet's consoling voice is first transposed onto Charlotte in the three *rondeaux* that, as we have seen, precede the text and set up the dialogical question-answer pattern between Charlotte and herself. Throughout the dialogue, Marguerite and Charlotte function as two complementary counterparts allowing for spiritual exchange and transformation: Marguerite's imprisoned mortal body versus Charlotte's immortal and liberated soul; Marguerite's tears at the loss of the beloved versus Charlotte's joy at union with Christ her spouse; the older and sinful Marguerite facing death in terrestrial life versus the younger and virginal Charlotte, reborn in celestial life after death. This almost dialectical scheme extrapolates to the two dialogical forces outside the text, God and the reader, when Marguerite expressly asks Charlotte to serve as an intermediary between her and God ("Si me fault il bien fort vous requerir / Que

¹⁹ For the Renaissance dialogue as an open, and open-ended, literary form in relation to humanist thought, see Kushner, *Le dialogue*, pp. 22–24, and Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts*, Castiglione to Galileo (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), pp. 3–6.

me soyés envers luy advocate, / Pour sa grace trouver que veulx querir," vv. 304–06) and when Charlotte in her answers to Marguerite addresses a Christian readership ("Mais *le chrestien*, de Jesuchrist vray membre, / ... / Se resjouyt de voir son corps en cendre," vv. 139–41). At the same time, however, we always hear spontaneously and individually motivated voices rather than rigid dialectics or a polemical discourse rousing the readership in support of any particular theological dogma.

* * *

Unlike the *Dialogue*, the *Navire* did not appear in print during the author's lifetime. The text was hardly known until 1896 when Abel Lefranc rediscovered and edited MS fr. 24.298 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, containing almost 12,000 verses of previously unpublished poetry by Marguerite.²⁰ This manuscript contains two major texts related to the passing away of her brother: the *Comédie sur le trespas du Roy* and *La Navire*. These works should be seen as part of a group of texts, a "cycle du grand deuil,"²¹ that relates to the illness and death of François I. They also include several *Chansons spirituelles* (*Pensées de la Royne de Navarre, estant dans sa Litteure durant la maladie du Roy*; *Autres Pensées faites un mois après la mort du Roy*; and *Rondeau fait au mesme temps*),²² a short verse epistle addressed to her brother after his demise,²³ as well as a passage in *Les Prisons* praising the ruler's past glory.²⁴ Written in the immediate aftermath of the event, the *Comédie*, like *La Navire*, is a *consolatio* (the term *comédie* was used loosely in Marguerite's time for a variety of theatrical forms) and indebted to the rhetorical *planctus* of a sovereign.²⁵ Unlike *La Navire*, however, the play dissimulates the sorrowful event under the veil of an eclogue, in which three bucolic characters lament the death of their god Pan (François I) in a succession of recitative and song.²⁶ The choice

²⁰ *Les Dernières Poésies de Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Abel Lefranc (Paris, 1896).

²¹ See Marguerite de Navarre, *Théâtre profane*, ed. V. L. Saulnier (Geneva and Paris, 1963; 1978), p. 207.

²² Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, vol. 9, *La Complainte pour un detenu prisonnier et Les Chansons spirituelles*, ed. Michèle Clément (Paris, 2001), pp. 83–91.

²³ Marguerite de Navarre, *Suyte des Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses, tres-illustre Royne de Navarre*, ed. Ruth Thomas (The Hague, 1970), pp. 65–71.

²⁴ Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva, 1978), vv. 2709–864 (pp. 225–30).

²⁵ In the *planctus*, the poet combines public mourning with commemorative praise of the deceased (see below).

²⁶ Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Cazauran, vol. 4, *Théâtre*, ed. Geneviève Hasenohr and Olivier Millet (Paris, 2002), pp. 409–41.

of this allegorical form supports an alternative explanation proposed by some critics for Marguerite's refusal to publish *La Navire* and most of these texts of mourning (with the exception of the verse epistle and a few of the *Chansons spirituelles*). While I believe that Marguerite's decision should be attributed primarily to the fact that she considered these texts, as well as the *Dialogue*, private poetic and spiritual experiences of mourning, if one focuses uniquely on their commemorative praise of the deceased king it can be argued that her choice is puzzling. This is all the more so, since the publication in 1547 of the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses* (in which the exceptions appeared)²⁷ or at least that of its second volume (the *Suyte des Marguerites*) in October of the same year, several months after the composition of *La Navire*, could easily have been arranged so as to include them. Robert Marichal therefore surmises that Marguerite's public silence surrounding the mourning of François and her decision not to publish *La Navire*, in spite of the fact that it contains significant passages of public and official mourning for the departed ruler, were inspired by fear. The image she paints of François I as a king inclined toward reformist ideas could have created trouble in the atmosphere of tightening Catholic censorship toward mid-century. For instance, she had left out the confirmation of loyalty to the Catholic faith that François I presumably pronounced on his deathbed.²⁸

La Navire received its title from the first words of the text in which Marguerite's brother compares her spiritual distress to that of a ship stranded far from its true harbor: "Navire loing du vray port assablee," v. 1.²⁹ However, it is also known by a modern title suggested by Gaston Paris shortly after Lefranc published the manuscript, *Consolation de François I^{er} à sa sœur*, which emphasizes its character as poetry of mourning and consolation. The absence of an original title is in line with the generally poor state of the manuscript, from which some verses are entirely lacking due to the oversight of the scribes. The detailed circumstances of the poem's genesis are described by Marichal, who dates its composition to June or July of 1547. When the king had died on 30 March, Marguerite had been unable to be at his bedside. Although informed of events shortly thereafter, she remained unaware of the circumstances of his death until June, when she received an *Oraison funèbre* pronounced by Pierre Du Chastel.

²⁷ See Jourda, "Tableau chronologique," p. 226.

²⁸ Marichal, ed. cit., pp. 64–67.

²⁹ All quotes will be from the Marichal edition. A feminine noun in middle French, *navire* has become masculine in modern French.

Enlightened by the details provided in Du Chastel's account, she wrote *La Navire* while residing at the priory of Tusson.³⁰

Other than her own *Dialogue*, which she may well have revisited in composing *La Navire*, there are no other major poetic intertexts directly at work in this poem, as was the case with Petrarch's *Triumphus Mortis* for the *Dialogue*.³¹ It is her use of the *terza rima*, however, that leads us to consider a possible indirect influence of the *Triumphus*. *La Navire* contains a number of textual references to Petrarch's vision but it is not clear if Marguerite remembers the text through revisiting her own *Dialogue* or if she had it again under her eyes as she composed the later poem.³² In any case, particularly noteworthy is the radiant and more hopeful ending of *La Navire*, compared to Marguerite's sorrowful state after Charlotte's departure, since Marguerite is steeped in the light of the rising sun of redemptive truth, in a way reminiscent of the sunrise at the end of the *Triumphus Mortis*.³³ Again, moreover, the use of *terza rima* and its back and forth movement is related to a Petrarchan mnemonic reconstruction of the lost beloved's physical presence (see further below).

In terms of its imitation of poetic models, *La Navire* differs in another respect quite significantly from the *Dialogue*. It displays a much greater indebtedness to the poetic traditions surrounding death, flourishing so abundantly in a period deeply conscious of mortality and ubiquitously presenting its imagery.³⁴ Whereas in the *Dialogue* Marguerite's lament of Death's cruel snatching away of Charlotte's bodily presence lingers only briefly in the initial speeches before giving way to discussion of spiritual and theological issues, in *La Navire* Marguerite dwells extensively both on the loss of her brother's physical presence and on her commemorative praise of the ruler's noble deeds. In so doing, the poem fuses two existing poetic traditions, the *consolatio* and the *planctus*, both of which feature

³⁰ Marichal, ed. cit., pp. 1–5; see also the pertinent parts from Du Chastel's *Oraison*, *ibid.*, pp. 307–14.

³¹ Intrigued by Marguerite's use of *terza rima*, earlier critics tended to speculate also on *La Navire*'s formal indebtedness to Dante's *Divina Commedia* but recognized that the similarities of a spiritual quest and the encounter and dialogue with a guiding spirit remain general and correspond to a variety of other canonical texts from mystical and theological traditions by writers such as Boethius, Nicholas of Cusa, and Catherine of Siena. See Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, 1:573–74, and Marichal, ed. cit., pp. 39–42.

³² For the verses in question, see Marichal, ed. cit., p. 43, v. 1, and Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 19–24.

³³ According to Marichal, "la même lumière baigne la conclusion des deux poèmes" (ed. cit., p. 43).

³⁴ See Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1997), esp. pp. 156–72.

descriptions of the earthly aspects of dying and bodily obliteration, and lament death as the personification of a non-redemptive force destructive of the *vanitas* of all earthly beauty. First, then, *La Navire* displays numerous elements of the more intimate lyric genre of the *consolatio*.³⁵ In reply to his sister's recalling of his corporeal beauty and her sorrowful laments on death's obliteration of his presence, François's consoling voice reminds her of the vanity of the flesh, of the continuous presence of death in our midst, and of the baseness of the body as an earthly prison made of mud and dirt and destined to rot and decay. François thus appeals to themes associated with the general idea of *memento mori*, "remember you will die," whose application in the text I will discuss further below.

In its second half, however, *La Navire* draws heavily on the tradition of the *planctus*, the *déploration* or *complainte funèbre* in French, which frames mourning and sorrow publicly and eternalizes the earthly memory of an authority figure in a poem that functions in many ways as a commemorative tombstone. The genre was extremely popular among the *grands rhétoriciens*, poets who were highly involved in the vicissitudes of aristocratic figures for the simple reason that the latter employed them and they stood at the forefront of producing consolatory, laudatory, and commemorative poetry to be pronounced at funeral services. Christine Martineau-Génieys has meticulously mapped their extensive corpus in the decades preceding *La Navire*: poets such as Georges Chastellain, Pierre Michault, Jean Molinet, Jean Robertet, Guillaume Crétin, and Jean Lemaire de Belges chant the macabre omnipresence and inescapability of an allegorized Death, who can strike anyone at any time and who annihilates all earthly vanities (*Le Thème de la mort*, pp. 191–437). In general, these works (a) depict the pain suffered by the deceased ruler's subjects, (b) draw his or her laudatory portrait, (c) provide a narrative of the ruler's last moments, and, most importantly, (d) insist on the sovereign's eternal memory and the perpetuation of his or her glory after bodily death, a theme they mimetically emphasize by figuring the text as a lasting funerary monument.

It is certain that Marguerite was familiar with many of these funerary texts, some of which were written in honor of deceased figures from her own entourage. Marichal goes so far as to suggest that, in the absence of an actual *Déploration de François I^{er}*, it may have been assumed by

³⁵ For the ancient tradition and examples of the *consolatio*, see E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1953), pp. 80–82.

court poets that Marguerite's *Navire* was intended as such (ed. cit., p. 52). However this may be, the building blocks of the *déploration funèbre* are all present in the latter part of the poem: Marguerite repeatedly praises François not just as her intimately beloved brother, but as her former sovereign; she commemorates his virtues, honor, and nobility and lauds his noble deeds, actions, and sayings, as well as his courageous attitude in facing the enemy during his captivity at the hands of the Spanish. Finally, she extols François's exemplary attitude, during his last moments, in the face of death. A most powerful passage of collective lament in the style of the *rhétoriqueurs* comes toward the end of the text. In verse 958, Marguerite addresses a long litany, starting with an imperative to cry ("Pleurez" is repeated over fifteen times), first to her own voice and eyes, then to a collectivity of men and women, nobles and clerics, merchants and warriors. This is followed by an appeal to several of François's close family members (his second wife, Queen Éléonore; his daughter-in-law, Catherine de Médicis; his daughter, Marguerite; and his son, the future King Henri II) as well as to his courtly subjects to gather at the deceased ruler's tomb and to follow her example in remembering the various noble and virtuous deeds he performed toward each of them.³⁶

Even if traditional *déplorations* often adopt a dream narrative, Martineau-Génieys is right to correct Marichal's erroneous view of *La Navire*'s formal setting as that of a dream (*Le Thème de la mort*, p. 558), a misunderstanding repeated by some later critics. However much both the *Dialogue* and *La Navire* may depict an oneiric and nightly atmosphere, similar to traditional dream narratives of encounters with spirits, in these two works we can speak only of a vision (*visio*) since there is no textual evidence suggesting a state of dreaming (*somnium*).³⁷ Moreover, while

³⁶ "Eleonor, o noble Royne, approche, / Viens de tes yeulx son sepulcre honorer; / Sa femme fuz, rien ne luy est plus proche" (vv. 988–90); "Toy, Catherine, es de larmes garnie, / Car perdu as ung pere, tu sces quel, / Qui ne fus onc de son amour bannye" (vv. 1012–14); "... o tres heureux Henry, / Qui ne faict cas de chose basse et mince. / O ceur de Roy, comme le plus merry / Qui oncques fut, je prens la hardiesse / De t'appeller dessus ce corps pery" (vv. 1094–98); "Las! venez tous, et que chacun se range / Prez de ce corps digne que vous pleurez, / Et demandez que Dieu de mort nous venge" (vv. 1285–87).

³⁷ The only verses that might be interpreted as referring to a state of sleep come toward the end of *La Navire* when François urges Marguerite: "*Esveille toy, laisse ton mortel songe / Voy le soleil tant clair et veritable / Qui chassera la nuict et sa mensonge*" (vv. 1321–23). However, the rhyme with "mensonge" suggests that the word "songe" refers only to the illusion of a sinful carnal life. The previous verse ("C'est que tu dors et ne veulx t'esveiller," v. 1320) suggests also that Marguerite's sleep and awakening refer symbolically to the sinful state in which she currently dwells and the blessed state she is urged to reach, not to actual dreaming and being awake.

in the *Dialogue* Marguerite attempts to discern the visual apparition of Charlotte as if she were some sort of hallucination, François's presence in *La Navire* is mediated exclusively through voice and the memories it triggers.

In a further important respect Marguerite's *Navire* substantially departs from the *déploration* tradition. In its rhetoric of Death's horrific and macabre power, the latter failed to grant much value to death's liberating and redemptive aspects. In *La Navire* however, Marguerite, as she had already done in the *Dialogue*, fully exploits the spiritually beneficial aspects of bodily death as a redemptive instrument of grace. In so doing, she follows the example of Clément Marot's *Déploration de Florimond Robertet* (1527),³⁸ a poem in which the allegory of death is related for the first time in this genre to the liberation of the body from a world of sin in order to allow the spirit into the celestial realm.³⁹ In fact, the echoes of *consolatio* in François's voice that I discussed above and his use of the typical vocabulary of *memento mori* depart from tradition because they are interspersed with repeated reminders that his bodily death has been redeemed in union with the body of Christ and with numerous exhortations addressed to Marguerite that she prepare for death by focusing on it as a joyful transition toward heaven.

A last major formal aspect to consider is *La Navire*'s dialogical framework. In broad terms, the text's dialogical dynamics mime the body/soul dichotomy in much the same way as in the *Dialogue*. In that sense this text too draws on the poetic tradition of the *disputatio* between flesh and spirit, the *discord de l'âme et du corps*: Marguerite's voice expresses earthly yearnings and sinful attachments whereas François's voice gives shape to the blissful realm of the soul.⁴⁰ However, the progression of the dialogical interaction differs from that in the *Dialogue*. The earlier text, as we have seen, overcomes the stifled opposition of allegorical figures through a more intimate dialogical flexibility that allows not only Marguerite's transformation, but also an open-endedness that stresses the dialogical process itself and preempts a climactic victory of one voice over

³⁸ "Et toutesfois, sans moy qui suis la mort / Aller ne peulx en l'eternelle vye," Clément Marot, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. François Rigolot, 3 vols. (Paris, 2007), 1:196 (vv. 299–300).

³⁹ Marichal, ed. cit., p. 54; Martineau-Génieys, *Le Thème de la mort*, pp. 439–85, esp. pp. 452–55.

⁴⁰ Winn, "Toward a Dialectic," pp. 86–88. Winn argues that there is a series of other related thematic dualisms rendered in the dialogical opposition (pp. 100–12).

the other. *La Navire* seems at first to echo the medieval *discords* more than the *Dialogue*, in the sense that we cannot detect a real progression in Marguerite's voice toward François's view. In fact, she becomes all the more determined in her earthly attachments and fixed on her memories of her brother. At the same time, however, the text does not allow either voice or position to triumph over the other, and thus remains almost as open-ended as the *Dialogue*. Marguerite's brief final prayer implies a sense of transformative grace when she understands that divine truth has been revealed to her, but it evinces only hope for her future spiritual transformation, not actual transformation itself.

Robert Cottrell thus argues that dialogue in *La Navire* is no more than a "closed system," an alternating succession of speeches by interlocutors "locked" in their positions (*Grammar*, p. 207). Jean Lecointe, by contrast, considers Marguerite's limited speaking in the *Dialogue* a real obstacle to its "dialogicity" and argues that it is precisely because she so stubbornly and elaborately defends her position in *La Navire* that the latter text represents a richer dialogue from the point of view of textual symmetry. According to Lecointe, Marguerite explores dissent and confrontation between the two interlocutors in *La Navire* and thus intensifies a dialogism that is latent in some texts of the *déploration* genre, in particular Marot's *Déploration de Florimond Robertet*. In this way, she creates a more "polyphonic" literary genre capable of exploring a complex range of conflicts and emotions in her experience of mourning, such as the right to abundantly express sorrow and to shed tears in the context of evangelical versus Stoic treatments of this issue.⁴¹ Whether Marguerite is staging the interlocutors as operating from locked positions or deepening the representation of the experience of mourning by exploring a range of passions and attitudes toward it,⁴² what we can say for sure is that the dialogical form allows *La Navire* to transcend poetic formulas and to deepen substantially the interaction between literary form and spiritual content.

⁴¹ Jean Lecointe, "Le Devis des larmes: polémique anti-stoïcienne et dialogicité, autour de *La Navire* de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Devis d'amitié: Mélanges en l'honneur de Nicole Cazauran*, ed. Jean Lecointe, Catherine Magnien, Isabelle Pantin, and Marie-Claire Thomine (Paris, 2002), pp. 369–84 (pp. 370, 377).

⁴² For dialogical aspects in poetic traditions of mourning and consolation in general, see Alexandre Tarrête, "Remarques sur le genre du dialogue de consolation à la Renaissance," *Bulletin de l'Association d'Étude sur l'Humanisme, la Réforme et la Renaissance* 57 (2003), 133–52. See also Cazauran, "Marguerite de Navarre: le deuil en dialogues."

From Spiritual and Religious Experience to Poetic Text

The formal and poetic aspects of the *Dialogue* and *La Navire* are inextricably linked to the spirituality and, in case of the *Dialogue*, the theological doctrine that fuel them. Despite the time separating their composition, the two works present remarkable similarities in this respect. I will now trace briefly the spiritual and doctrinal issues at stake in the two poems and offer a number of insights that nuance existing scholarship. From the outset it should be stated that neither poem engages in a polemical defense of or attack against doctrinal positions, let alone attempts to conduct systematic theological thinking. Given the general emphasis in Marguerite de Navarre's poetry on mystical access to God through faith and charity rather than on rational theology, the works' sole theological contribution is the *Dialogue's* poetic rendering of the contemporary debate on free will and justification by faith. For the rest, all spiritual and theological matters are subjected to the poems' larger purpose of dialogical self-examination, private mourning, and spiritual transcendence.⁴³

Clearly the *Dialogue*, conceived from the epistolary exchange with Briçonnet, is marked by the latter's spirituality that features a powerful Christocentrism, self-annihilating patterns of mystical ascent, and an uneasy interaction between human poetic language and the divine logos whereby the former can only adequately render the latter through a process of dissolution and silencing that is antithetical to the text's own rhetorical nature. While this spirituality influences Marguerite's entire poetic output,⁴⁴ the *Dialogue* and *La Navire* constitute two fundamental cases in point.

I alluded above to Marguerite's use of the mystical marriage theme, as it was introduced by Briçonnet, to recast earthly sorrow in terms of

⁴³ For the religious background to these years and Marguerite's proximity to the Meaux Group, see Henry Heller, "Marguerite of Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33 (1971), 271–310; Michel Veissière, "Ce que croyait Guillaume Briçonnet, évêque de Meaux," in *La vie, la mort, la foi, le temps: Mélanges offerts à Pierre Chaunu*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bardet and Madeleine Foisil (Paris, 1993); V. L. Saulnier, "Marguerite de Navarre aux temps de Briçonnet: Étude de la correspondance générale (1521–22)," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 39 (1977), 437–78, and 40 (1978), 7–47 and 193–237; Cottrell, *Grammar*, pp. 3–33; and Gary Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre's Devotional Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1992). For her relationship with Italian reformers, see Richard Cooper, "Marguerite de Navarre et la réforme italienne," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, pp. 159–88.

⁴⁴ "The spirit of Briçonnet is everywhere apparent in Marguerite's poetry," Cottrell, *Grammar*, p. 30.

celestial bliss. In response to her aunt's lament that she could have made a good match in marriage (vv. 85 and 106–11), Charlotte answers that she has obtained greater honor by being married as a virgin to Christ and thus remained without sin: "Mais *mon espoux* m'a fait plusgrant honneur / De me prendre en ma virginité" (vv. 112–13). Several other themes deriving from Briçonnet display a similar reworking along this Pauline axis of an opposition between the flesh and the spirit (carnal versus spiritual, earthly versus celestial): the lifeless tree from which Adam ate the fruit of sin becomes the fruit-bearing tree of Christ's cross (vv. 577–94); the earthly body perishes in order to become a member of the larger body of Christ, subject to its head ("Mais le chrestien, de Jesuschrist *vray membre*, / Croyant pour vray estre *uny à son chef*, / Se resjouyt de voir *son corps en cendre*," vv. 139–41); divine love is an all-consuming fire that destroys the attachments of earthly affection for the greater glory and enjoyment of the life of the spirit (vv. 235–61).⁴⁵

The spirituality of the *Dialogue*, inspired by Briçonnet, is driven by an upward movement, sometimes borrowing neo-Platonic ladder imagery ("Faisant de tout ce que l'on voit *eschelle*, / Tousjours montant sans y faire grant pose," vv. 737–38), in which one simultaneously mortifies the body and strives for the *unio mystica* of the soul with Christ enjoyed by Charlotte ("Je suys de Dieu l'amyte toute belle," v. 127). As Cottrell demonstrates, this process entails both a mortification of the body and a pulverization of the believer's consciousness of an independent self and the false perception of the latter's agency or will (*Grammar*, pp. 39–56). While I will return to the issue of agency, it is important to note that Charlotte insistently reminds Marguerite that the only path to union with Christ's mystical body is that of self-renunciation and the abandonment of all earthly and individual attachments under the guidance of divine love (variously referred to by means of metaphors of an all-consuming fire or a sweeping flood, *torrent*).⁴⁶

This general upward movement of spiritual transformation toward celestial bliss, most strongly expressed in Charlotte's voice, has led critics to argue that the poem reflects traditional medieval models of mystical

⁴⁵ For a detailed comparison between passages in the correspondence with Briçonnet and the *Dialogue*, see Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 24–35.

⁴⁶ See for instance the body (v. 141); family bonds (vv. 190–92); reason (vv. 226–28); worldly goods, pleasures, and honors (vv. 1129–37); and, most importantly, the ambition to know truth (vv. 925–40).

ascent, filtered through Briçonnet's lens. For instance, Hans Sckommodau claims that the poem's structure reflects the three stages of the *scala perfectionis*: *purgatio*, *illuminatio*, and *perfectio* (*Die religiösen Dichtungen*, pp. 77–84). Likewise, Paula Sommers makes the case for the presence of tertiary structures of ascent in the entire corpus of Marguerite's devotional poetry and argues that the *Dialogue* moves upwards from Marguerite's emphasis on individual faith to Charlotte's celebration of a communal Christian *caritas*, to which all personal faith should be directed (*Celestial Ladders*, pp. 40–42). It should be noted, however, that in terms of theological content these readings focus mainly on Charlotte as the principal interlocutor and tend to undervalue both Marguerite's participation and the overall mimetic role of the dialogue.

Another important aspect of Briçonnetian spirituality in the *Dialogue*, discussed at length by Cottrell, is the dilemma of poetic language as an earthly product in the face of the divine logos—in the words of Briçonnet, the *Tout-Verbe* (*Grammar*, pp. 19–33, 46–56). Following Augustine, Briçonnet believed that human language, although redeemed through the incarnation of Christ (the Word of God made flesh), remained imperfect. His spiritual rhetoric—or, as Cottrell terms it, his “mechanics of signification”—implies that we first understand words, in particular those of Scripture, as worldly signs in a sensorial realm (*verba*) and only afterward learn to interpret them spiritually as referents to transcendental truths (*res*). In addition, words in their worldly and literal meaning are *Rien* (Nothing) and their sole purpose is to be dissolved in spiritual meaning, *le Tout* (All). This hermeneutic process parallels the believer's annihilation of all consciousness of the self in ascending toward the enjoyment of Christ. Thus, for Cottrell, the poetic force of the *Dialogue* consists in its continual oscillation between, on the one hand, the representation of the individual believer's journey to *unio mystica*, which implies a linear, rational narrative and a worldly use of words, and, on the other hand, the poetic rendering of the dissolution that *is* the actual enjoyment of the *unio mystica*, in which words cease to be meaningful and dissolve into pure spirituality. Aside from the profound insight Cottrell provides into the relationship between poetic language and religious experience in Marguerite's time, his reading also emphasizes that writing poetry for Marguerite, both at this stage and later in *La Navire*, is motivated by a larger concern with the question of human agency and participation in matters of faith and spirituality, a concern exemplified in these poems in a context of mourning, transcendence, and (particularly in *La Navire*) memory.

Likewise, critics have considered the *Dialogue's* extensive material on doctrinal issues of faith, grace, and free will almost exclusively as her response to contemporary debates raging in theological and humanist circles, or at least claimed that they should be seen in the sole context of Marguerite's alleged Lutheran sympathies and her tense dealings with the Sorbonne. One could argue, however, that the *Dialogue's* sometimes testy exchanges between Charlotte and her aunt on this issue are driven by Marguerite's desire to explore poetically and dialogically her individual concern with human will and its ability to participate in matters of faith and grace. It should be kept in mind, for instance, that all the textual passages in question are constructed as Charlotte's replies to Marguerite's deeply personal anxieties. This apprehension about what Marguerite is able *to do* is epitomized when, following a passage in which Charlotte seeks to convince her aunt that she herself is in a state of celestial bliss, Marguerite desperately asks: "Mais dictes moy: *que fera* vostre tante?" (v. 201). Moreover, as many critics concede, these passages neither contribute new theological subject matter to existing debates nor do they militantly defend ideological positions.⁴⁷ In the last section of this essay, I will therefore argue that these two poems express Marguerite's concern for individual agency in these domains, in particular, mimetically, through their form as poetic dialogues.

We cannot ignore, however, that the dialogue between Marguerite and Charlotte contains many doctrinal elements of theological debate. Almost half their exchange (vv. 457–690 and vv. 871–1244, roughly 600 of the 1294 lines) involves questions of free will, the importance of good works, and justification by faith and thus refers to the debate raging contemporaneously between Erasmus and Luther.⁴⁸ On the one hand, Marguerite's voice doubtfully but insistently asks for advice on the legitimacy of man's claim to enjoy free will or *franc arbitre* ("Las! Madame, donnés moy congnissance: / Ne m'a pas Dieu donné ung franc arbitre / Pour en avoir entiere jouyssance?" vv. 457–59; cf. vv. 874–76) and on the possibility of preparing salvation through good works ("Mais, Madame, pour ceste grace avoir, / Ne me doibs je pas bien fort preparer / A y faire mon possible

⁴⁷ For theological and doctrinal issues, see Sckommodau, *Die religiösen Dichtungen*, pp. 73–77; Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 36–43; and Marguerite Soulié, "Les convictions religieuses de Marguerite de Navarre, d'après le *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* (1524)," in *Devis d'amitié*, pp. 329–45. Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief* stands as the authoritative work on the theological, doctrinal, and spiritual aspects of Marguerite's devotional poetry.

⁴⁸ See Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 36–43 for Marguerite's familiarity with the Erasmus-Luther debate and Luther's writings on free will.

et debvoir?" vv. 499–501; cf. vv. 517–19). On the other hand, Charlotte's extensive answers stress man's imprisonment in an utterly sinful nature which precludes him from any kind of agency to even discern good from evil ("Qui de peché est pris et ataché / Serf de peché sans liberté devient," vv. 475–76), thus making salvation entirely dependent on God's grace initiating man's faith (see vv. 310, 382, 412–13, 478–83, 492, 933, and 1147) and rendering the question of merit through justifying works superfluous ("Vous ne ferés par rigle ny compas / Plus grans oeuvres qu'ung Turc ou ung Juif, / Et pour cela saulvé ne serés pas," vv. 565–67). Through Charlotte's voice, the *Dialogue* seems to bolster Luther's famous argument of justification by faith alone, including its corollaries that man has neither free will nor the capacity to choose the good, and that performing good works does not lead to salvation.

Gary Ferguson's insightful study, however, has significantly nuanced this view of the *Dialogue* as a Lutheran text by showing that, at a deeper level, its soteriological thinking can be traced back to Augustine and early Catholic theologians (*Mirroring Belief*, pp. 26–42). These generally held that man had possessed free will in a prelapsarian state, but that it had been rendered dysfunctional by sin and could only be restored by God's grace. Thus, following Bonaventure and Briçonnet, Charlotte describes the working of grace as tripartite: "Mais la bonté de Dieu, qui tout previent, / Luy presente grace *preveniente*, / Voir à l'heure que de luy ne souvient. / Puis luy donne la grace *illuminante*, / Qui commence faire ung peu la foy luyre. / Après y mect grace *perficiente*" (vv. 478–83). This idea allows for a degree of human collaboration in the reception of grace: prevenient grace may be a purely gratuitous gift from God, but it implies that the believer can decide to refuse or to collaborate with the other two stages. More importantly, Ferguson points to Charlotte's insistence on a free will restored to man *after* receiving all three stages of grace, a doctrinal view rejected by Lutheran reformers: "Franc arbitre luy est lors *redonné*, / En luy trouve *sa liberté* perdue / Par trop avoir en peché sejourné" (vv. 493–95; cf. vv. 880–82). In terms of the believer's degree of agency in this matter, Charlotte, although adamantly refusing that works compel grace, implies that the *intrinsic* merit and righteousness of human beings is reactivated once mystical union with Christ has been achieved, so good works performed are a result of man's Christocentricity, another idea foreign to Lutherans: "Si vous avés vouloir de faire bien, / C'est le vouloir de Dieu, car le seul vostre / Est vouloir mal, quant riens n'y a du sien" (vv. 532–34; cf. vv. 955–57).

Although Charlotte repeatedly stresses the sole power of faith for salvation,⁴⁹ this aspect too needs to be treated with caution when we assess the text's position between competing doctrines. Her repeated use of the epithet *vive* in combination with *foy* ("C'est *vive foy* qui scait si bien conduire / Cœur, ame et corps," vv. 484–85)⁵⁰ cannot be overlooked in the context of the ideologically and doctrinally motivated uses of the same term by Catholic, reformist, and evangelical writers in Marguerite's time.⁵¹ Generally speaking, the term *vive foy* in the *Dialogue* echoes Augustine's idea that intellectual faith itself is not enough for justification but needs to be accompanied by hope and love, which can take the form of active charity. While scholarly positions diverge on the meaning of the term for Catholics and reformers,⁵² one can say that Catholic writers tend to use it to indicate faith as shown in works of charity, which are a form of human participation in salvation, whereas for Calvin and Protestant writers, *vive foy* meant mostly *foy confidence*, a personal faith characterized by an unwavering trust in God's promises, regardless of the good works it may make us perform as a result. Charlotte's voice occupies a middle position that could be characterized as Fabrist or Erasmian: *vive foy* is both *foy confidence* and a faith that must express itself in good works and a loving bond with one's neighbor if it wants to be effective: "J'entens en Dieu *totalle confidence*, / . . . / Croyant du tout sa promesse certaine, / . . . / Et cest amour *se monstre deffendant* / *En son prochain, soudenant pour luy peine*" (vv. 601–10; cf. vv. 1018–50 and 1195–1244).

* * *

In *La Navire* Marguerite is less concerned with embedding individual mourning and spiritual transcendence in theological and doctrinal considerations. Instead, François's voice concentrates solely on those aspects of Briçonnet's spirituality and contemporary theological debates that concern a personal experience of *unio* with Christ: the celestial life of the

⁴⁹ See for instance vv. 230, 465, 484–86, 569, 581, 595–600, 658, 696, 767, 843, 1057, 1090, 1118, 1142, 1184, 1188, and 1244.

⁵⁰ See also vv. 696, 767, 1090–91, 1118, 1188, and 1244.

⁵¹ For a detailed contextual study of the use of the *vive foy* locution in the *Dialogue*, see Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 147–67, an analysis that should be read in conjunction with Isabelle Garnier-Mathez's exhaustive historical and linguistic study of these and similar epithets in writings by French Evangelicals, *L'Épithète et la connivance: Écriture concertée chez les Évangéliques français (1523–1534)* (Geneva, 2005); for *vive foy*, see pp. 157–97 and 288–98. My discussion is much indebted to these two studies.

⁵² Garnier-Mathez, *L'Épithète et la connivance*, pp. 157–59, seems to settle the issue.

disembodied spirit, love as *caritas*, and faith (*vive foy*) as a strong personal trust in God. Broadly speaking, the more Christocentric outlook featured in *La Navire* strips these elements of the dogmatic freight they carried in the *Dialogue*. François's *consolatio*, in particular in the long first part of the poem before Marguerite initiates her *planctus*, effectively blends imagery from Briçonnet's allegorizing spirituality with ladder elements of neo-Platonic ascent and repeatedly depicts *vive foy* as a transformative abandonment to the figure of Christ. Thus, as Marichal notes, because of its lack of theological debate and its emphasis on individualized mystical experience, *La Navire* paradoxically stands closer to Briçonnet's teachings than the *Dialogue*.⁵³

François urges Marguerite to refigure her misguided carnal love ("faux amour," v. 94; "aymant la chair," v. 97) into truthful divine love, which he associates both with the figure of Jesus as lover and with a collective *cari-tas* depicted as a fire that absorbs all individual love: "Parfaict amour, c'est le Dieu eternel, / Qui dans les cueurs sa *charité* respand" (vv. 82–83); "Icy se faict de charité *le feu*" (v. 422); "*Parfaicte amour* de l'aymer te convyne, / Veux que Jhesus, le *tres parfaict amant*, / De la porter pour toy a eu envye" (vv. 871–73; cf. vv. 466–68 and vv. 1393–95). This love first destroys and empties, then transforms and fills anew the believer:

Amour le veult *defaire et deformer*,
Et en l'Amy ayment parfaitement
Perdre du tout et en luy *transformer*.

Qui sent d'amour *l'aneantissement*,
Se resjouyst, *perdant* ce qui n'est rien
Pour *recevoir* son Tout *entierement*. (vv. 88–93)

Likewise, the fallen carnal body is refigured in the spiritual and truthful body of Christ: "Amour te painct *ung corps de fange et boue* / Pour t'amuser, ignorant *ce vray corps* / Que Dieu puissant son filz nomme et advoue" (vv. 811–13); and the tangible cross the believer worships in prayer becomes the figurative living cross of redemption in Jesus's suffering:

Or, *prend sa croix pour faire ung eschauffaut*
De terre au ciel . . .
.
En ceste croix verras ta vie luire,

⁵³ Marichal, ed. cit., p. 17. For a detailed overview of the similarities in spiritual imagery between the *Dialogue* and *La Navire*, see Marichal's annotations.

Car le Vivant pour toy la croix a prise,

.....

Embrasse la, ceste croix, et la prise. (vv. 862–68)

The spiritual transformation François asks Marguerite to pursue is framed in terms of an upward flight (“Et prens ton vol à la vie eternelle!” v. 333), a ladder-structured ascent (“Qui vit en chair, il vit en une abisme / De tout péché, demeurant en *l’eschelle* / Tousjours au pied, sans regarder la cime,” vv. 328–30), and a transgressive upward leap (“Si à moy veulx venir, *faictz donc ung sault* / Hors de ta chair et toy mesmes renonce,” vv. 460–61). As in the *Dialogue*, its result is framed as citizenship in the celestial realm (“... sachant qu’en Paradis / *Citoyen suys de la grande cite*,” vv. 476–77).⁵⁴

The poem’s only vestige of concern with the believer’s free will further reveals François’s Christocentric perspective on this issue: once one receives grace and fully loves God, individual and divine wills coincide, making the question of an idiosyncratic free will irrelevant: “Qui ayme Dieu et de luy seul deppend, / *Qui son voulloir au sien veult conformer* / Beaucoup y gangne et bien peu y deppend” (vv. 85–87). Likewise, the notion of *vive foy* acquires the narrower meaning of a pure and firm confidence in God, both in Marguerite’s reference to François’s earthly endeavors (“Roy tres crestien, *vivant en ferme foy* / Envers son Dieu *sans une seulle doubte*,” vv. 136–37) and in François’s explanation of its guiding value for Marguerite’s upward spiritual journey (“Haulce ton ceur et soyes poursuivant / Ce que *la foy* peu à peu t’aprendra,” vv. 850–51).⁵⁵

Finally, in spite of the absence of a substantial treatment of the doctrine of grace, I concur with Jean Lecointe’s observation that the text’s concluding prayer mimes the infusion of grace in Marguerite’s mind:⁵⁶

O Vérité que je sçay deriver

De Dieu, tu as ung *pouvoir invincible*

.....

Tu rendz en moy facile l’impossible,

.....

Par ceste mort tu m’as humiliee

Jusqu’en enfer: j’ay senty ses lyens,

Et puis m’en as *par grace* deliee. (vv. 1441–49)

⁵⁴ Cf. *Dialogue*: “Si Foy vous faict cheminer ce grant pas, / *Citoyenne serés de ma cité*” (vv. 1184–85).

⁵⁵ See Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 169–70.

⁵⁶ Lecointe, “Le Devis des larmes,” p. 370. See also Sommers, *Celestial Ladders*, pp. 79–82.

It should be noted in particular how these verses direct human agency toward an overcoming of earthly sorrow in spiritual transcendence (“Tu rendz *en moy* facile l’impossible”), thus mirroring Marguerite’s understanding of the process of grace as containing some element of human participation. These concluding verses (vv. 1441–64) are both detached from and inextricably linked to the preceding dialogue: François has withdrawn to the celestial realm yet Marguerite’s transformation is still a direct result of their exchange. If her voice in conversation with her brother expressed earthly intransigence, it now conveys a serenity and a sense of resignation radically different from her previous words. This state of mind is depicted as the result of grace’s assistance, both in personal mourning (she thanks the Lord for having comforted her sorrow and states that grace has “unbound” her [*deliee*] in relation to François’s physical loss) and in prevailing over earthly love through charity: “*O Charité, au Seigneur ententive / En ta brebis pis que morte et perie / Tu as usé de ta bonté naïfve*” (vv. 1456–58).

II. Poetic Dialogue: Human Agency in Mourning and Memory

At this point I propose to contribute to our understanding of the *Dialogue* and *La Navire* by revisiting their form as poetic dialogues. The experiences of mourning, consolation, and remembrance, as well as the problematic desire for spiritual transcendence, are to a large extent both represented and mimetically intensified by the poems’ formal characteristics as dialogues written in *terza rima*. This poetic dialogism lends them a unique status: it transforms what might have been a rather formal poetry of loss, sorrow, consolation, and remembrance, in combination with equally formalistic elements of doctrinal debate and praise of the deceased, into poetic exercises in self-examination, spiritual transcendence, and memory that valorize human agency and Christian self-consciousness as embodied in particular by the interlocutor Marguerite. In this context, the term “dialogical” has a twofold meaning: it refers not only to the rhetorical structure of a spoken exchange between two interlocutors, it also implies the sensorial realm of voice, speech, and hearing that is created in a dialogical fiction.

First, the poems’ dialogical structure should be understood as the splitting of an inner poetic voice into two distinct voices. Jacqueline Cerquiglini has shown how a separation of the poetic *I* into an *I* “locuteur” and a *you* “allocutaire” in French late medieval poetry reflects a “temptation of

dialogue" and a "pluralization of voices."⁵⁷ As for the *Dialogue*, Eva Kushner has elucidated this doubling of the poetic voice by labeling the exchange between the conflicting views of Marguerite and Charlotte "an inner dialogue between two aspects of the author's self and therefore a gradual process of inner persuasion" (*Le dialogue*, p. 117). These critics show that the dialogical text can serve to explore a private inner world and in this way is distinguished from texts that mimetically represent opposed voices in an outward ideological domain.

In this light, an illustrious inner dialogue comes to mind to which Marguerite might have had access: Petrarch's *Secretum* (*De secreto conflictu curarum mearum*), whose title exemplifies the meaning of the Latin *secretus* as "severed from," "isolated."⁵⁸ The *Secretum* is an examination of the sinful Christian conscience through a meditation on mortality in an interior dialogue between the voices of Petrarch and the spirit of Augustine. It is staged in a secluded dream space and, Petrarch insists, in the absence of other participants or witnesses. In the *Proemio*, Petrarch, otherwise intent on poetic fame, calls the work a private colloquy not to be published during his lifetime and recorded for the sole purpose of reexperiencing its joy in the future. In other words, the text functions as Petrarch's model self-interrogation in the face of death, to be conducted repeatedly and privately over his lifetime.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Jacqueline Cerquiglini, "Le lyrisme en mouvement," *Perspectives médiévales* 6 (1980), 75–86; idem, « *Un engin si subtil* »: Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIV^e siècle (Paris, 1985), pp. 91–103.

⁵⁸ I have previously argued for the influence of Petrarch's text on Marguerite's *Dialogue*: Reinier Leushuis, "Dialogue, Self, and Free Will: Marguerite de Navarre's *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and Petrarch's *Secretum*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 66 (2004), 63–83. For the probability of Marguerite's familiarity with Petrarch's text, see pp. 75 and 76n.

⁵⁹ "I decided to set down in writing this *intimate conversation* so as not to forget its details . . . I do not want this work to be put in the same category with my others, nor do I intend that it should enhance my reputation. The aim of the book transcends those considerations. *I have written this book to experience as often as I want, by reading it, the joy I experienced when we had the conversation.* This little volume, therefore, is not intended for wide circulation, *but will remain among my private papers*—in keeping with its title. For it is a *private conversation*, and so shall be called," Petrarch's "*Secretum*" with *Introduction, Notes, and Critical Anthology*, ed. Davy Carozza and H. James Shey (New York, 1989), p. 39. All italics are mine. Cf. "Hoc igitur tam familiare colloquium ne forte dilaberetur, dum scriptis mandare instituo, mensuram libellus huius implevi. Non quem annumerari aliis operibus meis velim, aut unde gloriam petam (maiora quedam mens agitat) sed ut dulcedinem, quam semel ex colloquutione percepi, quotiens libuerit ex lectione percipiam. Tuque ideo, libelle, conventus hominem fugiens, mecum mansisse contentus eris, nominis proprii non immemor. *Secretum* enim *meum* es et diceris," Francesco Petrarca, *Prose*, ed.

In the dialogue's first book, Augustine prepares Petrarch for an examination of his conscience by heuristically leading him through the true method of critical meditation on the self, i.e., a meditation that is not mere self-deception on the part of the sinful soul. Only critical meditation can lead to the recognition and avoidance of sin and guide the self to true happiness and virtue. In this way, the first book lays the foundation for the second book's discussion of the seven deadly sins and for the third book's deeper analysis of Petrarch's specific sins, lust and pride. Augustine insists that Petrarch should constantly meditate on death and mortality in order to free his soul from sin and earthly pleasures: "the first step in . . . rising to a higher kind of life is meditation on the fact of death and human unhappiness" (p. 45) ("ad tollendumque se se altius, primum veluti gradum obtinere *meditationem mortis* humaneque miserie," p. 34). This *meditatio mortis* should not be a casual thinking about death and its terrifying prospect, but a repeated meditative exercise—"the constant recollection of your mortality" (p. 52) ("mortalitatis vestre *recordatione continua*," p. 48)—that will free Petrarch instead of frightening him.

Petrarch's role in the dialogue mimetically underscores the necessary perseverance in this meditation. While Augustine hammers home the *memento mori* theme from his first pronouncements ("have you forgotten that you will die?" "there is no more effective way of . . . finding peace of mind . . . than to meditate on the fact of death," p. 41; "non te mortalem esse meministi?" "ad . . . componendumque . . . animum . . . nichil efficacius reperiri quam . . . meditationem mortis," p. 28), Petrarch repeatedly forces him to return to it and to show the difference between self-deceiving fears of dying and a true meditation on mortality. The dialogical process itself stages an exercise in incessant *meditatio mortis*: "practicing dialogue" itself means for Petrarch creating an awareness of mortality that frees the soul from sin in order to obtain virtue and happiness.

Augustine is adamant about man's agency in this *meditatio mortis*: giving the example of his own conversion, he states that he owes it to a commitment of his will: "at last a deep meditation brought home to me the full extent of my unhappiness. And so, *after I committed my will fully*, I was instantly able to act and with amazing and blessed swiftness I was a changed man" (p. 48).⁶⁰ The application of our will in the meditation on

G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, E. Carrara, and E. Bianchi (Milan, 1955), p. 26. Italics are in the text.

⁶⁰ "donec alta tandem meditatio omnem miseriam meam ante oculos congegit. Itaque postquam *plene volui*, ilicet et potui, miraque et felicissima celeritate transformatus sum" (p. 40).

mortality is a crucial part of the exercise: "the will must be there and a will so strong that it would properly be called yearning" (pp. 59–60) ("Voluntas igitur presto sit, eaque tam vehemens ut merito desiderii vocabulum sortiat,ur," p. 64). Moreover, the idea of the application of the will is integrated into the structure of the dialogue as it becomes clear that dialogical self-examination is a process that continues beyond their meeting. When Petrarch says he wishes to return to his studies in what seems to be a setback to the examination of his sins (since he had confessed that his studies are a form of pride), Augustine reminds him that his will is lacking, but adds that he feels confident Petrarch will return to these thoughts. Instead of concluding climactically in a victory of newfound wisdom, the author, to greater effect, mimetically underscores the ongoing process of self-examination and *meditatio mortis* in inner dialogue.

In short, Petrarch's *Secretum* stands as a model for the use of literary dialogue with an imagined authoritative and spiritual other voice (Augustine) that constitutes an exercise in inner debate, self-examination, and memory in the face of death and mortality. Moreover, it valorizes the Christian subject's will and agency both within the space of the text (the dialogical interaction mimes the continuous performance of the exercise) and over the span of a lifetime (by reason of repeated meditation).

* * *

Both the *Dialogue* and *La Navire* are similar to the *Secretum* in their creation of inner dialogue. They figure a space secluded from other worldly voices and uniquely occupied by those of the sinful self and the spiritually authoritative other (Marguerite and Charlotte / François). Moreover, as we saw above, Marguerite, like Petrarch, was reluctant to publish her *Dialogue* and *La Navire*, although she likely returned to the earlier poem when composing the later one. These facts, while circumstantial, justify a reading of the two works in the light of the *Secretum*, namely as inner and private dialogical exercises, written for the purpose of self-examination, *memento mori*, and transcendence in the face of death and mortality, and valorizing human agency and will in these processes and experiences.

Beginning with the *Dialogue*, one notices first Marguerite's strong appeal for a consoling voice within herself, capable of responding to her sorrow, in the same way as she had implored Briçonnet to continue their spiritually comforting epistolary exchange during the months of Charlotte's demise. This appeal for inner dialogue is most passionately expressed in the *rondeau* that opens the 1533 edition, a true *De profundis clamavi ad te*, proffering a desperate and imploring *Respondés moy* as an insistent refrain:

*Respondés moy, o doulce ame vivante,
 Qui, par la mort qui les folz espouvente,
 Avés esté d'ung petit corps delivre,
 Lequel huyt ans accomplis n'a sceu vivre,
 Faisant des siens la vie trop dolente;*

*Dictes comment en la court triumpante
 De vostre Roy et pere estes contempte,
 En declairant comme amour vous enyvre:
 Respondés moy.*

*Las! Mon enfant, parlés à vostre tante
 Que vous laissés après vous languissante,
 En desirant que peine à mort me livre!
 Vie m'est mort par loysir de vous suivre,
 Pour soulager ma douleur vehemente,
 Respondés moy.*

From the outset, shared intimacy and love for the other ("*Amour a faict mon cuer inseparable, / Avec vous si lyé par nature,*" vv. 34–36) are the birthplace of dialogue: "*Que cuer à cuer veulliés à moy parler, / Donnant d'esprit à esprit reconfort*" (vv. 44–45). Even though Charlotte's voice seeks to refigure this earthly bond at the spiritual level (their union is transcended by union with Christ, the divine spouse; earthly affection is absorbed into communal *caritas* represented by God), this intimate inner dialogue guarantees a space to the voice of Marguerite's earthly self and, by its very nature, prevents her dissolution in *unio mystica*. In this sense, the force of Charlotte's voice as a doubled inner voice is that she connects *two* dialogical spaces: on the one hand, the colloquy with Marguerite's earthly self and, on the other hand, communication with the divine through the mystical marriage with Christ. Charlotte thus stands at the center of a larger dialogical structure that connects the terrestrial and the individual (earthly love and affection) with the celestial and communal (*caritas*). Instead of dissolving one into the other, as her calls for self-annihilation seem to imply, Charlotte's position between these two dialogical forces guarantees for Marguerite a sense of agency and participation in her experience of mourning and spiritual transcendence.

Moreover, the *Dialogue* as inner dialogue mimes ongoing and deliberate self-examination in the face of death and an active search for truth in the process of spiritual transcendence. Even if Marguerite claims that she wants to abandon her own will to follow Charlotte ("*... de bon cuer j'abandonne / Mon viel Adam et propre voulenté,*" vv. 682–83), she ultimately never does. From the opening section onward, Marguerite repeatedly

inquires into the nature of Charlotte's suffering: "Quelle douleur sentites au partir, / Que trop grande je croys, quoy que l'on dye?" (vv. 167–69). This active and inquisitive *meditatio mortis* is paralleled by Marguerite's constant questioning and thirst for knowledge throughout the text, in particular in the long discussions on free will:

Las! Madame, *donnés moy congnoissance*
Ne m'a pas Dieu donné ung franc arbitre
 Pour en avoir entiere jouyssance? (vv. 457–59)

Mais, Madame, *donnés moy congnoissance*

 C'est de scavoir *si j'ay arbitre franc*. (vv. 871–74)

Mais encores *demande il me fault*
 Comme *je puis bien entendre ou scavoir*
Si j'ay ce don de foy . . . (vv. 1192–94)

Toward the end, she becomes outrightly rebellious regarding the possibility of loving her enemies in a perfect state of *caritas* ("Cecy ne peult, Madame, estre planté / Dedens mon cueur, mes ennemys aimer," vv. 1051–52). Charlotte, far from satisfying Marguerite's quest for knowledge, remains antagonistic: she asks her aunt to be silent about issues ("Tante, tante, de cecy vous fault *taire*," v. 76) and reproaches her for erring ("Vous *errés* trop, ma tante, en cest affaire," v. 88) or for being in defiance of Christ ("Helas! tante, et quelle deffiance / Avés de luy," vv. 355–56). In the free will debate, she warns Marguerite not to seek too much knowledge and to leave the issue to the theologians: "Ceste chose soit de vous entendue, / *Sans desirer plus avant en scavoir*, / Car les plus clerchez y troublent bien leur veue" (vv. 496–98).

Despite its appearance of mimed theological and doctrinal catechetics, the *Dialogue* is first and foremost Marguerite's private and self-examinatory debate, staged in a doubled inner voice and triggered by the author's confrontation with death and mortality. As for Petrarch, self-examination here is a dialogical exercise in the meditation on mortality and thus an application of the agency needed for this exercise. In figuring Charlotte as the counterforce seeking to neutralize individual participation in mourning and spiritual transcendence, against her aunt Marguerite, desiring knowledge and requiring participation, Marguerite the author valorizes dialogue as a sustained literary exercise in human agency and participation in the experiences of mourning, salvation, and spiritual transcendence.

* * *

A reading along similar lines is equally fruitful for understanding *La Navire*. The text's dialogical dynamics reflect many aspects of the *Secretum* and *Dialogue* discussed above. First, the dialogue is generated in the form of an intimate symbiosis with an authoritative other voice. François, as other, is to a degree also a doubling of the voice of Marguerite's self. This becomes clear in Marguerite's use of the image of the *cymois*, the cloth in which infants are swaddled, which symbolizes the bond she had with her brother in life. In Marguerite's gradual recognition of her brother's voice at the beginning of the exchange, the image functions to create a symbiotic sense of dialogue as a doubled *inner* voice: "Es tu celluy que *plus que moy j'aimois*, / Et aymeray et ayme si tres fort / *Que Amour, enfans, nous lya d'un cymois*?" (vv. 49–51). This idea is underscored when Marguerite stresses the unsurpassed quality of their past conversations when François was alive: "Je l'ay perdu le plus saige *entretien* / Qui oncques fut!" (vv. 118–19). Generally speaking, once we consider François's voice as the doubling of Marguerite's inner voice, their dialogical exchange can also be seen to display the characteristics of a *self-examination* on the spiritual issues discussed above through an ongoing meditation on death and mortality.

The interlocutor Marguerite can hardly be said to process François's lessons over the course of the text however, mainly because she refuses to abandon earthly memories. One could argue, as does Lecoite, that this intransigence guarantees the very duration over time of the exercise in self-examination, allowing Marguerite to deepen her sense of mourning. At the same time, we have seen that *La Navire* lacks the flexibility of dialogical dynamics that, in the *Dialogue*, allows for a degree of transformation and mobility on the part of Marguerite and thus for an ongoing mimetic staging of human agency and participation in experiences of mourning and spiritual transcendence. In other words, since Marguerite and François are locked in alternating speeches rather than engaged in real dialogical interaction, François, unlike Charlotte, fails to function as a true intermediary between the earthly and divine realms. Moreover, as noted earlier, the final "sunrise" prayer, while miming the redemptive effect of transformative grace, suggests the possibility of future transcendence rather than describing an actual experience. While staged as a *result* of the encounter, Marguerite's hope for transformation in the final verses is not embedded within the dialogical *interaction*, from which it is clearly detached. In this sense, the dialogue fails to perform a constructive

exercise in mourning, salvation, and spiritual transcendence, as does the *Dialogue*.

It is precisely Marguerite's inability to abandon earthly memories, however, that invites us to pursue a different approach to assess the mimetic quality of *La Navire*'s poetic dialogism. In relation to the later work, we need to shift the emphasis from dialogue understood as a structuring of exchanges between interlocutors toward dialogue understood as a mimetic exchange of spoken language in a sensorial realm that consists of voice, speech, and audition. In *La Navire*, these sensorial aspects of dialogue can be seen in connection with the role of the senses in the working of memory, namely as an instrument to recall a lost presence visually and acoustically. In exploring the link between dialogue and sensorial memory, *La Navire*'s poetic dialogism also valorizes human participation and agency in the experiences and processes of mourning, spiritual transcendence, and remembrance, but in ways that are different from the *Dialogue*.

Let us begin by examining the general role of sensorial memory for the staging of the interlocutorial other in the dialogical realm. In both the *Dialogue* and *La Navire*, but most persistently in the latter, Marguerite attempts to recall and rescue from oblivion, visually and acoustically, her interlocutors' physical presence. It is significant that both Charlotte and François urge Marguerite to obliterate all earthly memories created by the senses. More precisely, they call on her to reduce earthly memory to its single operation of *memento mori*: in line with Augustine's lesson in the *Secretum*, Marguerite needs to remember that the body must perish in order to allow her to abandon the fallen earthly state and to proceed in spiritual ascent and self-annihilation toward *unio mystica* with Christ. *La Navire* in particular, as I will show below, can be read as a mnemonic exercise that continually explores rather than resolves this tension between the sensorial memory of a carnal past and a "divine" memory that allows us to remember God.

In the opening of the *Dialogue*, Marguerite's memory is activated by the sensorial experience of Charlotte's lost carnal presence: "Mais en mon doeul et piteux souvenir, / Ayant esté sans parler longue piece, / Il me sembla que je la veis venir" (vv. 10–12). The combination of mourning and remembering ("doeul et souvenir"), whereby the latter is described as *piteux*, both sorrowful and imperfect, gives rise to visual perception ("je la veis venir") and, ultimately, recognition: "La recongneue pour Madame et ma niepce" (v. 15). At the same time, Marguerite realizes this is a vision, not *real* seeing, and that Charlotte is not *actually* present ("il me sembla que je la veis venir"). She then urges her interlocutor to speak to her:

"Si celui seul qui a force puissante / . . . / Ne vous deffend *parler à vostre tante*" (vv. 22–24) and to look upon her sorrow: "Ne laissés pas de *regarder ma peine!*" (v. 33), while continuing to be aware of the fact that Charlotte's presence is intangible and does not replace real sensorial presence: "Bien que soyés de mes yeulx *invisible*, / Et l'oreille de la voix *soit privée*" (vv. 25–26). The realm of the dialogical *visio* and the working of memory thus mutually reinforce each other and have essentially the same sensorial function. Both are driven by sight and speech (and the latter's corollary, hearing) to recreate and preserve a lost presence in the form of an interlocutorial other, who is physically intangible but nevertheless capable of being seen and of speaking.

The mnemonic working of the senses to recreate a lost actual presence in an oneiric-poetic reality that allows visual and acoustic presence offers further evidence of a Petrarchan influence, since it echoes the figuring of Laura in the *Triumphus Mortis*. Here, Petrarch and the spirit of Laura recall in a dreamed dialogue the painful details of her death and glorify their past earthly love. After an elaborate visionary description of the triumphant allegorical pageant of Lady Death, that accompanies Laura, the latter's address to the poet in the second part of the poem features remembrance as a recreation of visual and acoustic presence. Petrarch first describes Laura as "parlando e sospirando" ("speaking and sighing"; *TM* II, 11),⁶¹ which is followed by her voice calling forth his visual recognition: "*Riconosci* colei che 'n prima torse / i passi tuoi dal publico viaggio?" (*TM* II, 13–14),⁶² and then instantly triggering it, as is clear from Petrarch's reply: "« Come non *conosco* io l'alma mia diva? » / risposi *in guisa d'uom che parla e plora* / « Dimmi pur, prego s' tu se' morta o viva! »" (*TM* II, 19–21).⁶³ Petrarch's "in guisa di," "as if I were" or "similar to," reminds us that the poet-narrator's speaking is an oneiric semblance of terrestrial speech. The dialogue between Petrarch and Laura in the poem thus emerges from mnemonic recognition and the sensorial recreation (through speaking

⁶¹ References follow the standard conventions for Petrarch's *Triumphs*: the initials of the title followed by the chapter and verse number. The Italian text is quoted from *Rime, Trionfi, e poesie latine*, ed. Neri, the English translation from Petrarch, *The Triumphs of Petrarch*, trans. Ernest Hatch Wilkins (Chicago, 1962), which I have altered in a few instances. All italics are mine.

⁶² "Do you recognize her who first, and long ago, / Guided your steps away from the common path?"

⁶³ "How could I fail to know my heavenly guide? / I answered, alike to one who weeps and speaks, / Tell me, I pray, are you in life or in death?"

and listening, but arguably also weeping and sighing) of a lost *real* presence that is now intangible yet still capable of dialogical interaction.⁶⁴

Moreover, Petrarch's confusion over Laura's presence as dead or alive ("Dimmi pur, prego s' tu se' morta o viva!") marks the poetic realm shaped by sensorial memory as an intermediary space, containing neither tangible physical presence nor some kind of pure spiritual transcendence (an absolute absence of physicality). Laura's reply "*Viva son io e tu se' morto ancora*" (*TM* II, 13–14)⁶⁵ not only introduces a spiritual thematic that Marguerite eagerly explores (sinful carnal existence is a form of death transcended after physical death), but also highlights Laura's *living* presence in the dialogue. This idea is reinforced by the repetition of the epithet "Viva" at the beginning of the next verse, which powerfully opens her reply to Petrarch's anguished question.

Fabio Finotti's claim about the role of memory in the *Triumph*, most accurately illustrated by the *Triumphus Mortis*, can shed further light on this issue: the poem is less motivated by a forward- or upward-moving transcendence of history, as in the Dantean spiritual journey of the *Divina Commedia* (to which Petrarch responds and which he imitates in the idea of a series of liberating "triumphs" over earthly behaviors and attitudes), than by a retrogressive mentality that seeks to arrest and eternalize physical earthly presence through the workings of memory and the poetics of the humanistic dream vision:

Laura *does not* return as Beatrice did to guide the poet in another world, to a point where he could go on *without her* . . . In *Triumph* it is Laura who is the ultimate object of Petrarch's desire. Nor are there any other spirits who disrupt the dialogue between the two lovers, maintaining the tone of *an intimate and private conversation* [my italics]. Laura, in fact, returns first and foremost for *remembering* . . . The present is not modeled on what one wishes to attain in the future, as in the *Divina Commedia*, but on what one wishes to relive from the past . . . Time stops in this enchanted, transformed remembering.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ We should keep in mind that Petrarch seeks to recreate Laura's presence *immediately* after the tragic event of her death ("La notte che segui l'orribil caso," *TM* II, 1), at a time when sensorial memory is still very active. Carlo Vecce draws attention to the concreteness and realness of oneiric events in this text in comparison with Petrarch's other poetic dream narratives: "La lunga pictura: visione e rappresentazione nei *Trionfi*," in *I Triumphs di Francesco Petrarca: Gargnano del Garda (1–3 ottobre 1998)*, ed. Claudia Berra (Bologna, 1999), pp. 299–315.

⁶⁵ "I am in life, and you are still in death."

⁶⁶ Fabio Finotti, "The Poem of Memory: *Triumph*," in *Petrarch, A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (Chicago, 2009), pp. 63–83.

Finotti's claim about Petrarch's *Triumph* is useful for analyzing Marguerite's two poems, since it sheds light on the tensions present in the workings of memory and the senses when the poet is faced with the mortality of the deceased beloved. It thus allows us to question the uni-directional spiritual transcendence often said to characterize this poetry.

Laura's injunction to the poet-narrator to keep his speaking short so as to benefit most from their dream encounter—"Ma 'l tempo è breve e nostra voglia è lunga; / però t'avvisa e 'l tuo dir stringi e frena / anzi che 'l giorno, già vicin, n'aggiunga" (*TM* II, 25–27)⁶⁷—aside from reflecting the general obsession with the fleetingness of time in Petrarch's poetry, further connotes the poem's space as a unique, if temporary, sensorial conjunction of dream vision (which will soon be cut short by daylight), memory (which is at risk of deterioration), and dialogue. This verse indeed sets up the dialogical framework that starts immediately: "*Ed io: « Al fin di questa altra serena / ch'è nome vita . . . »*" (*TM* II, 28–29; cf. 121)⁶⁸ and that Petrarch maintains throughout the rest of the poem with the usual diegetic indicators: "rispose" (*TM* II, 31, 126), "rispos'io" (*TM* II, 172), "dissi" (*TM* II, 42, 185), "disse" (*TM* II, 46, 88).⁶⁹

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At this point we can reconsider the use of *terza rima* in the *Dialogue* and *La Navire*. This, I believe, was motivated by Marguerite's reading of Petrarch's *Triumphus Mortis* and should be understood in connection with her laborious (and in *La Navire* conflicted) mnemonic and sensorial recreation of the lost beloved in a dialogical realm. While a detailed analysis of *terza rima* in the *Triumphus Mortis* falls outside the scope of this essay, the five *terzine* that depict the apparition of Laura as it precedes and sets up the poem's dialogical exchange merit our attention. In these strophes *terza rima* mimetically renders the thematic intertwining of the workings of memory and Laura's sensorial presence in the dream vision.

(p. 80). See also Sara Sturm-Maddox, "*Arbor vittoriosa triumphale*: Allegory and Spectacle in the *Rime* and the *Trionfi*," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare Iannucci (Toronto, 1990), pp. 113–34, and Maria Cecilia Bertolani, *Il corpo glorioso: Studi sui Trionfi del Petrarca* (Rome, 2001), pp. 71–102.

⁶⁷ "Our time is short, and our desire is long: / Therefore take thought, and count and check your words / Before we be parted by the light of day."

⁶⁸ "And I: When earthly life comes to its end . . ."

⁶⁹ According to Carlo Vecce, more than in other *Triumph*, the dream narrative emphasizes the acoustic and sensory presence of Laura over visionary markers ("*La lunga pictura*," p. 303).

The poet describes how night spread its coolness over the dark earth after Laura's death:

quando donna sembiante a la stagione,
 di gemme orientali incoronata,
 mosse ver me da mille altre corone,
 e quella man già tanto *desiata*
 a me, parlando e sospirando, *porse*
 ond'eterna dolcezza al cor m'è *nata*:
 « Riconosci colei che 'n prima *torse*
 i passi tuoi dal publico *viaggio*? »
 Come 'l cor giovenil di lei *s'accorse*,
 così, pensosa, in atto umile e *saggio*,
 s'assise e seder femmi in una *riva*
 la qual ombrava un bel lauro ed un *faggio*.
 « Come non conosco io l'alma mia *dìva*? »
 risposi in guisa d'uom che parla e plora
 « Dimmi pur, prego, s' tu se' morta o *viva*! » (*TM* II, 7–21)⁷⁰

The sensorial perception of Laura is enhanced by the poet's visual recognition of the concrete movement ("mosse ver me") that separates her from the multitude of "a thousand other crowns," apparently other noble ladies in the throng of followers of Death in the first part of the poem. This is followed by a *terzina* whose rhymes build up a succession going from the poet's act of remembering his *past* desire ("*già tanto desiata*") to the concrete, sensorial perception of Laura's hand reaching out to the poet ("porse"), which then recreates the poet's love in the *present* dream vision ("eterna dolcezza al cor m'è nata"). In a mirror image of this sequence (separation from the multitude—recognition—love), now concerning Petrarch himself, the verb "porse" from the previous tercet's *b* verse, which

⁷⁰ When toward me, from among a thousand crowns,
 There came a lady like unto the Spring,
 Crowned with a diadem of orient gems.
 Speaking and sighing, she held out to me—
 Bringing eternal sweetness to my heart—
 The hand that I so greatly had desired.
 "Do you recognize her who first, and long ago,
 Guided your steps away from the common path?"
 Pensive she was, and humble, and yet wise,
 As when my heart was first aware of her.
 She sat, and I beside her, by a stream
 Overshadowed by a laurel and a beech.
 "How could I fail to know my heavenly guide?"
 I answered, alike to one who weeps and speaks,
 "Tell me, I pray, are you in life or in death?"

indicates Laura's reaching out in the *present* dream vision, is picked up in the next tercet's first rhyme "torse," pointing to Laura's action in the *past* ("n prima"), namely to guide the poet's steps away from the crowd ("pubblico viaggio"), as well as in this tercet's last rhyme to refer to the mnemonic recreation of the poet's *past* recognition of and love for Laura ("l cor giovenil di lei s'accorse"). Yet the "Come" that opens this last line of the tercet compares and blends this *past* sequence of recognition-followed-by-love with *present* narrative events ("just as ["come"] when my young heart had become aware of her, so also ["così"] now she, pensive, sat and made me sit by a stream"), thus stressing the mnemonic recreation and continuation of Laura's sensorial presence in the dream vision.

Similarly, the rhyme of this tercet's *b* line ("viaggio") is repeated in the "saggio" (*a*) and "faggio" (*c*) of the next tercet in a poetic progression that figures a transcendence of the poet's *past* earthly wanderings ("viaggio")—i.e., before having encountered the spiritual beacon that is Laura—toward the perfection of Laura in the *present* dream vision, namely as "humble and wise" ("umile e saggio") and as symbolized by the laurel and beech ("faggio"), the two trees that traditionally associate Laura with Petrarch's literary fame. This movement from past to present is then projected into the future in the next interweaving. This tercet's *b* line, "riva," evoking the concreteness of their isolated *locus amoenus*, the birthplace of oneiric intimate dialogue in the *present*, triggers the two principal rhymes of the following tercet ("diva" and "viva") that eternalize Laura beyond her death in her status as (forever) divine and alive. We also note that the lines containing these last two rhymes are rendered in Petrarch's voice that not only speaks in present direct discourse but effectively answers Laura's initial question and thus initiates the mimetic of the dialogical exchange that dominates the poem from this point onward.

Before turning to *La Navire* and the mnemonic issues it raises, let us briefly take into consideration the introduction of Charlotte in the opening of the *Dialogue*. The *Dialogue's terza rima* scheme operates in a manner similar to that of Petrarch. It mimes the mnemonic reconstruction of the child's presence that was lost so very recently (Petrarch's line "la notte che seguì l'orribil caso" may have had an eerily familiar ring for Marguerite). Like Petrarch, Marguerite uses *terza rima* in this mimetic function in the series of tercets that follows the depiction of her sorrowful state of mind but precedes the actual dialogical exchange. Marguerite's suffering, denoted in the *b* rhyme of the poem's third tercet, "Telle douleur ne pourroit *soustenir*" (v. 8), is first recast in two rhyme words in the next tercet that establish a pattern going from memory of a lost past—"Mais

en mon doeul et piteux *souvenir*" (v. 10)—to visual representation of concrete presence—"Il me sembla que *je la veis venir*" (v. 12). Shortly after this, Marguerite reconstructs Charlotte's lost physical presence in the dialogue's sensorial realm:

Bien que soyés de mes yeulx *invisible*,
Et l'oreille de la voix soit *privée*
Qui en mon cuer donnoit joye *indicible*;

Bien que soyés, triumpicante, *arrivée*
Où sans cesser buvés en la fontaine
De charité; aux esleuz *dérivée*;

.....

Amour a faict mon cuer *inseparable*,
Avecques vous si lyé par *nature*,
Que le despart m'en seroit *importable*.

Je seuffre ennuy aultant que *creature*
En peult porter au corps pour vostre *absence*,
Pensant aux ans de votre *nourriture*.

Mais mon esprit, qui a la *connaissance*
De vostre bien, et vie par la *mort*,
Remplit mon cuer de grant *resjouissance*,

Qui me contrainct vous supplier bien *fort*
Que cuer à cuer veulliés à moy *parler*,
Donnant d'esprit à esprit *reconfort*. (vv. 25–30; 34–45)

After a tercet that emphasizes Charlotte's *absence* and the loss of past physical presence by means of its riming epithets ("invisible/privée/indicible"), the next strophe reframes the previous tercet's *b* rhyme ("privée") positively as *presence* in the realm of the vision ("triumphante, arrivée" and "aux esleuz dérivée"), even if Charlotte's presence is less concrete than Laura's in Petrarch and depicted in celestial terms. The same pattern is repeated in the two following tercets, which describe Marguerite's sorrow over the loss of the child's bodily presence. She remembers this presence ("pensant aux ans de votre nourriture") in particular as a close blood relationship ("mon cuer inseparable," "lyé par nature") and feels its absence as *bodily* pain ("en peult porter au corps"). Yet the following tercet positively recontextualizes the *b* rhyme in "absence" (v. 38) as "connaissance" and "resjouissance," words that reflect Marguerite's spiritual

and emotional awareness (“mon esprit,” “mon cœur”) of Charlotte’s presence in the vision. Finally, the rhyme that refers to the notion of death in life (“vie par la mort”) is transcended in the rhyme words connoting the comforting and living *sensorial* presence of Charlotte as interlocutor in the dialogue (“vous supplier bien *fort*,” “reconfort”), a presence that is both spiritual (“d’esprit à esprit”) and emotional (“cœur à cœur”). Significantly, the *b* rhyme “parler” is recast literally: it triggers the actual start of their exchange in the next tercet, where Charlotte replies to Marguerite’s address and thus initiates real mimetic dialogue.

The *terza rima* in the opening tercets of *La Navire* has a mimetic function that is reminiscent of, but also distinct from Petrarch and the *Dialogue*, since it both connects and deliberately *fails* to connect memory with sensorial presence. Rather than creating a progression, *terza rima* here mimes an oscillation, prefiguring *La Navire*’s central conflict between the sensorial memory of François’s carnal past and the imperfect awareness of his divine presence. It is also notable that *La Navire* starts immediately with François’s voice and thus lacks the sensorial progression from visual to acoustic that we see in Petrarch and the *Dialogue*; here we are immediately in the sensorial realm of mimetic dialogue.

The tercets following the first hearing of François’s voice mimetically render its sensorial effect on Marguerite:

Que je devins, quant ceste voix *j’ouys*,
Je ne le sçay, car soubdain de mon *corps*
Furent mes sens d’estonnement *fouys*!

O quelle voix! Qui par sus tous *accordz*
Me fut plaisante, douce et tres *agreable*,
Qui des vivans sembloit et non des *mors*. (vv. 22–27)

However, instead of a constructive progression going from François’s past physical presence to its sensorial recreation in the vision, the rhyme words reveal an oscillation between a recollection of the *living* François and an unwanted awareness of the *dead* François. This back-and-forth movement expresses Marguerite’s trouble in re-materializing François as a *living* spirit. The effect of François’s voice on Marguerite’s perception in the first tercets (“ouys,” “corps,” “fouys”) at first suggests the other’s marked sensorial presence in the vision’s poetic space, which the second tercet seemingly carries on when it alludes to the pleasure (“accordz,” “agreable”) his voice triggers. However, the last line of this tercet, instead of continuing this progression, allows the *b* rhyme “corps” (connoting sensorial presence) from the previous tercet to fall back to the negative “mors”

(connoting physical absence). Although the meaning of this line suggests recreated presence (“des vivans *sembloit* et *non* des mors”), reminiscent of Marguerite’s perception of Charlotte in the *Dialogue* (“Il me *sembla* que *je la vois venir*”), the final rhyme word “mors” only evokes François’s continued absence in comparison with Charlotte’s concrete “venir.” It is a far cry from Laura’s affirmative “Viva son io” or even from the “*congnoissance / De vostre bien*” that Marguerite experiences with regard to Charlotte’s presence in the *Dialogue*.

After three tercets in which François attempts to make his presence further known, a similar pattern emerges in Marguerite’s reply:

Es tu celluy par qui l’eau trouble et noire,
Sans nul espoir, il y a quatre *moys*,
Parfaicte amour de larmes m’a faict boire?

Es tu celluy que plus que moy *j’aimois*,
Et aymeray et ayme si tres *fort*,
Que Amour, enfans, nous lya d’un *cymois*?

Et ses liens prindrent toujours *renfort*,
Tant que la corde en chesne fort fut *faicte*,
Tousjours croissant et plus fort que la *mort*.

Es tu celuy en qui joye *parfaicte*
Trouvee avois, sy remply de vertu
Que mort devoit differer la *deffaicte*? (vv. 46–57)

The indication of earthly time in the past (“il y a quatre moys”) is first expanded in a tercet whose rhyme words positively reinforce the two interlocutors’ strong affectionate symbiosis in the past (“aimois,” “fort,” “cymois”), whereby v. 50 even suggests its continuation in the present and the future (“aymeray et ayme”). Yet the next tercet develops the preceding tercet’s *b* rhyme “fort” into *a* and *c* rhymes that suggest an insurmountable conflict between past and present, life and death. While the content of the tercet evokes strong ties to earthly existence created by the love between Marguerite and François (“ses liens prindrent toujours *renfort*,” “en chesne *fort*,” “plus *fort* que la mort”), the rhyme word “mort” stresses the crushing contrast between past “renfort” and François’s irremediable current state. Rather than producing any kind of sensorial presence in the poetic vision, it suggests an absolute absence in the present time: Marguerite refuses to face François’s real death at all costs by dwelling on his lost carnal presence. Likewise, the *b* rhyme of this tercet, “faicte,” comparing the strength of the bond of their past earthly love to that of oak, in the next tercet turns

first into “parfaicte,” a parallel epithet describing the joy of this symbiosis, then into a negative and definitive “deffaicte.” This last tercet treats of a living François (death had to defer its action), but it is a François living in the *past* and irrevocably dead in the present poetic realm. In other words, the use of *terza rima* mimes the oscillation between an attempted mnemonic and sensorial recreation of a “living” François as poetic presence (like Laura and Charlotte) and its paradoxical failure: in the verses meant to glorify François’s past earthly presence, the epithets riming in *terza rima* unremittingly suggest his irrevocable absence in death: “fort,” “renfort,” “mort” / “faicte,” “parfaicte,” “deffaicte.”

* * *

Keeping in mind the conflicted mimetics of *terza rima* in *La Navire*’s opening tercets, let us now extrapolate this insight to the larger question of the role of the senses in the poem as it relates to the thematics of memory and remembrance. Generally speaking, in the first part containing François’s *consolatio*, the dialogue emphasizes a sensorial perception that involves in particular voice, speech, and hearing but also sight, albeit somewhat less concretely (Marguerite never actually *sees* François, who is only present as a voice she *hears*, but there are several important references to sight). This dialogical realm of speaking and hearing stands in relation to the role of memory as the poem stages it.

In contrast with Petrarch’s visionary *Triumphus Mortis* and Marguerite’s more visually engaging *Dialogue*, *La Navire*’s dialogue, lacking a concretely described setting, is born out of silence into a sphere dominated solely by speech. François’s voice powerfully breaks the silence when it appeals to Marguerite to annihilate her carnal existence (“Navire loing du vray port assablee, / . . . / Tire toy hors de ton corps non sçavant,” vv. 1–4). The resulting sensory effect on Marguerite is immediate: “Que je devins, quant *ceste voix j’ouys*, / Je ne le sçay, car soubdain de mon *corps* / Furent *mes sens d’estonnement fouys*,” vv. 22–24; “O quelle voix! qui par sus tous accordz / Me fut plaisante, douce et tres agreable” (vv. 25–26). François imperatively urges his sister to listen to his voice: “*Entendz la voix* qui te veult destorner / D’un perilleux estat en ung tres seur” (vv. 32–33); Escoutte moy . . .” (v. 243). Moreover, the diegetic markers that indicate the changes of interlocutor throughout the text insistently add acoustic precisions concerning the interlocutor’s reply (tearful, divine, irritated, etc.):

Ainsi luy dis d’une *esploree* voix;
Il respondict d’une *venant des cieulx* (v. 62–63)

Lors ceste voix *d'armonie paree*
 Me dict . . . (vv. 175–76)

En ce disant, j'ouys sa voix *honneste*,
 Mais d'un accent ung peu *enflammé d'ire*,
 Disant . . . (vv. 292–94)

Mais ceste voix *se haulça par rigueur*,
 Disant . . . (vv. 397–98)

While the interaction between Marguerite and François is acoustic, we should not overlook the many additional references to the sense of sight, either as absence (“Ton frere suis, le quel *plus tu ne vois*,” v. 64), as expressing Marguerite’s desire to see François again in life (“O la journee . . . / Où de mes *yeulx* j’espere *veoir* mon frere!” vv. 382–84), in François’s evoking of the celestial realm (“*Icy void l’on* comme Dieu seul opere,” v. 445), or, finally, in Marguerite’s strong evocation of earthly memories (“*Je voy tous-jours* ton visage et beau taint,” v. 766).

On the one hand, François urges his sister to transcend a terrestrial functioning of the senses:

Mais si *charnel* encore est ton *regard*
 Que rien que *chair* en moy tu ne *regarde* (vv. 184–85)

Mais qui par foy *l’oeil a eu esveillé*,
 En *regardant* d’amour son Dieu et père (vv. 442–43)

Cloz à la chair *ton oeil* interieur,
Voirras en clair (vv. 485–86)

On the other hand, Marguerite laments the loss of her brother’s earthly existence, which is cast in terms that emphasize both visual and acoustic aspects:

Trop tost, trop tost t’a *osté de mes yeulx* (v. 59)

O la presence à *tous yeulx agreable* (v. 121)

Je *ne voys plus* tel maistre et instructeur (v. 230)

Privee suis de *l’ouyr et du veoir* (v. 256)

Mais je *n’ois* plus en terre ung tel langaige (v. 229)

The acoustic memories, in particular, are often framed as a memory of the dialogical exchanges that took place between them in the past: “Quant

tu vivois, j'oyois ton saint *devis* / Ton bon *propos*, tant vertueux et saige"
(vv. 226–27).

The major difference from the *Dialogue* is that in *La Navire* Marguerite only remembers in order to mourn François's loss and absence; she fails to reactivate this memory sensorially in the *present* exchange by reconstructing the other's presence visually and dialogically. Even if Marguerite adamantly points to the experience of hearing François's voice and describes its acoustic qualities, we do not have the impression that she is actually talking with him ("Ainsi parla *ceste voix*," v. 244), let alone seeing him. The sensorial acts of speaking, hearing, and seeing are thus mnemonic devices in the *sole* sense of remembering as commemoration (the glorification of François's past earthly living) *not* as "re-membering," i.e., the visual and acoustical recreation of his presence.

This dichotomy only intensifies over the course of the poem. While Marguerite at first acknowledges that carnal memory needs to be transcended by divine wisdom ("Mon ame fit à l'heure son *devoir* / D'habandonner *sa terrestre memoire* / Pour se adonner à *ce divin sçavoir*," vv. 43–45), François's calls to mortify the flesh only lead to Marguerite's increased efforts to keep recalling her brother's physical presence. She refuses to forget, obsessively forcing herself to remember:

Cours sont les jours, courtes me sont les nuitz
Pour y penser et pour *ramentevoir*
Ce que *oublier je ne veulx ny ne puis*. (vv. 253–55)

Ramentevant jusqu'à la moindre chose (v. 268)

O! pleust à Dieu que ensemble *je retinse*
Le souvenir des actes et beaux faictz (vv. 631–32)

Car nonobstant que tousjours en toy pense,
Ou de toy chante, ou je parle ou j'escriptz,
Memoire est trop *chiche* en ceste despence. (vv. 637–39)

At the poem's midpoint, Marguerite enhances her sensorial commemoration when she evokes an allegorized Love, who paints François's lasting bodily portrait in her heart:

Ce pauvre Amour, veritable et gentil,
D'un souvenir et memoire eternelle
.....
Il painct au vray ta personne tant belle
Que la pareille en mon temps ne se treuve:
Devant mes yeulx tousjours je la voy telle.
.....

Possible n'est donc qu'il ne me *souvienne*
De ce qui est sy bien à mon cœur *painct*. (vv. 754–64)

In these stanzas, the sense of sight perpetuates and eternalizes Marguerite's carnal memory of François ("souvenir et memoire eternelle," "tousjours je la voy telle"). This is mimetically amplified in the ensuing litany of fourteen tercets that recall François's beauty of body and soul (the latter manifest in his fortitude during his Spanish captivity) and repeat an obstinate "Je voy (tousjours)" as a deliberate *ut pictura poesis*:

Je voy tousjours ton visage et beau taint (v. 766)

Je te voy prins en païs estranger (v. 772)

Je te voy là avec telle constance (v. 781)

Je te voy là vertueux en torment (v. 790)

Je te voy là estimant moins que riens
Mort et prison . . . (vv. 799–800)

The working of the senses is entirely commemorative: "Je voy tousjours," "I see still," indicates at all times the lingering memory of earthly visions of François's past physical presence. The senses fail to recreate any kind of current sensorial presence for François as interlocutor in the dream vision, unlike Charlotte, where sensorial recreation led to real spoken interaction ("Que *cueur à cueur* veulliés à moy *parler*, / *Donnant d'esprit à esprit* reconfort," vv. 44–45). Finally, in the last third of the poem, as I have already described, sensorial memory turns into an all-out encomiastic commemoration of King François I as a sovereign, according to the fixed scheme of the *déploration funèbre*.

A closer look at François's use of memory, however, reminds us that in pressing his sister to annihilate earthly sensorial perception and carnal memories he does not want her to break radically with this function. Whereas in the *Dialogue* Charlotte points out to her aunt that she had reached celestial bliss by painlessly obliterating all memories of her past terrestrial existence ("Car sans regret de pere, mere ou seur, / *Ne memoire avoir de riens ça bas* / Mon ame print à soy mon redempteur," vv. 190–92),⁷¹

⁷¹ Charlotte here exemplifies Briçonnet's thinking on the worldly annihilation necessary for the experience of the divine, which can be seen, according to Nicolas Russell, as a "radical act of forgetting," *Transformations of Memory and Forgetting in Sixteenth-Century*

François imperatively instructs Marguerite to remember their past conversations in earthly life: “*Souviennne toy, ma seur, et te recorde / Que maintefoys telz propoz t’ay tenu*” (vv. 112–13). The “telz propoz” refer to the preceding 13 tercets that discuss how the vanity of the flesh as a form of misguided love needs to be remedied by divine love: “*Amour . . . / Qui à la chair par vain plaisir s’attache, / Ameine au cueur regret, peine et douleur*” (vv. 76–78). Therefore François’s request that Marguerite remember his *past* and *earthly* discourse about overcoming *past* and *earthly* vanities creates a continuity with the current dialogue; in so doing, he mimes the exercise of *memento mori*, similar to that Augustine forces Petrarch to undertake in the *Secretum*, namely one in which a *past* sinful state of being (vanity of the flesh) needs to be sensorially remembered for the *sole* purpose of renouncing and overcoming it in *present* spiritual awareness.

A key passage in François’s discourse in the first third of the poem can be interpreted along the lines of an Augustinian *meditatio mortis*:

Dieu m’a tiré de sa terrestre garde,
Dont tout bon cueur, ainsi que prisonnier,
En veult saillir, et l’issue luy tarde.

D’un coffre vieulx, cage, estuy ou panier,
D’une prison et fosse tres obscure,
Rompue au main estant faicte d’hier.

Tu en faictz cas, o pauvre creature!
Estime tu ung corps faict pour pourrir,
Suyvant sans plus ton instinct de nature?

N’est faict vivant l’homme pour tost mourir?
Sçais tu pas bien que sa vie est plus breve
Que d’un courier ou poste le courir?

Sçais tu pas bien qu’il n’a jamais treve
Avec la mort que pour bien peu de temps,
Dont l’attente est trop ennuyeuse et grievée?

.....

Tu le sces bien, mais tres mal tu l’entendz. (vv. 187–204)

François's "remember you will die" ("Sçais tu pas bien qu'il n'i a jamais treve / Avec la mort . . .?") is an effort to correct Marguerite's misguided remembrance of carnal life. Reducing her sensorial memory of his "terrestre garde" to a "corps faict pour pourrir," he seeks to prepare her to transcend earthly cognitive awareness in favor of a deeper spiritual understanding that she has not yet reached ("Tu le sces bien, mais tres mal tu l'entendz"). François wants Marguerite to remember his past bodily presence *only* as fallen and rotten flesh.

Thus François does not call for the obliteration from memory of sensorial experience, but for its *redirection* towards a spiritual level. We witness this phenomenon each time he brings up the use of the senses in relation to past, present, and memory: "Ton frere suis, *lequel plus tu ne vois*" (v. 64) is followed by "Ma seur, *d'autre oeil il fault que tu regarde*" (v. 70). The beneficial language Marguerite heard spoken *about* God from others in the past ("Toy qui as tant de Dieu *ouy le bien dire*," v. 295) is recast as "la Parolle *vive*" (v. 301), the voice *of* God himself: "*Escoutte*, seur, comme il frappe à ta porte, / En t'*apellant d'une voix* sy tres doulce" (vv. 601–02). Likewise, in a series of tercets in which he describes the realm of the blessed, he tries to guide his sister toward the divine seeing he himself performs in a concrete celestial "here and now": "Je voy *icy* la puissance infinie" (v. 413); "*Icy void* l'on comme Dieu seul opere" (v. 445). In verses 412–59, "icy" is repeated no fewer than 17 times.

Halfway through the poem we find another example of François's attempt to redirect carnal sensorial memory, reduced to *memento mori*, into spiritual memory. After Marguerite's long lament full of visual memories of her brother's earthly deeds and words, François angrily interrupts her:

Amour te painct ung corps *de fange et boue*
 Pour t'amuser, ignorant ce *vray corps*
 Que Dieu puissant son filz nomme et advoue.

Laisse de moy tous ces *charnelz recordz*,
Recorde toy de Celluy qui l'ouvrage
 Faisoit en moy par ses divins *accordz*. (vv. 811–16)

The shift in bodily sensorial experience, namely from François's fallen body to Christ's "vray corps," is paralleled in this passage by an equally pivotal shift from carnal memory ("ces *charnelz recordz*") to divine memory ("Celluy qui l'ouvrage / Faisoit en moy par ses *divins accordz*"). Marguerite poetically stresses this idea by reframing the final noun-object "recordz" in

verse 814 as an active verb in the imperative, "*Recorde toy*," at the beginning of the next line.⁷²

This line "*Recorde toy de Celluy qui l'ouvrage / Faisoit en moy par ses divins accordz*" urges Marguerite, in simple terms, to remember God. This raises an intriguing theological question that Augustine treats in Book 10 of his *Confessions*: how do we actually remember God if, in order to do so, we need to access an image or representation in our memory that was created neither directly by our sensorial perception of reality nor indirectly by the capacity to combine other images already contained in our memory through sensorial perception? For Augustine, God's presence in memory (*memoria Dei*) does not derive from these common procedures of storing, organizing, and managing mnemonic representations of worldly things.⁷³ Indeed, as Nicolas Russell observes, "[t]he difference between Augustine's vast store of worldly memories and his memory of God is not simply that they have different objects; they are, in effect, different *kinds of memory*" (*Transformations*, p. 30). The former creates an illusion of an absent actual or physical presence, while the latter does not *refer to* an absent reality but is a form of real and *permanent* presence. Spiritual memory has access to the same storehouse of our memory, but its objects, God or the divine, are stored as actual *realities*, not as images or representations. In that sense "divine memory" can be said to be a form of knowledge or understanding that, once grace is conferred upon us and we live in faith, we "remember" we have (or, conversely, that we forget we have when we live in sin).⁷⁴

At first reading, *La Navire* stages an opposition between these two forms of memory. In a way, the dialogical structure can be understood as a tragic conflict wherein François constantly urges Marguerite to abandon one kind of memory for the other and the latter constantly fails. However, as we have seen, François also does not want her to radically break with all earthly sensorial memory because it is still needed for the exercise of

⁷² For the larger issues of memory and forgetting that *La Navire* raises, see Russell, *Transformations*, pp. 21–31, to whose critical analysis I am much indebted.

⁷³ Augustine covers memory in Book 10, chapters 8–26.

⁷⁴ For an overview of the role of memory in Augustine's thought, see Joseph Mourant, *Saint Augustin on Memory* (Villanova, Penna., 1980); Roland Teske, "Augustine's Philosophy of Memory," in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge, Eng., 2001), pp. 148–58, and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Mystery of Continuity: Time and History, Memory and Eternity in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Charlottesville, 1986), esp. pp. 19–26 and 65–67. For Augustine's understanding of the connection between memory and our knowledge of God, see also Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, Eng., 1990), p. 199.

meditatio mortis. In other words, for François too, the point of departure for the operation of divine memory necessarily has to be in the realm of sensorial memory and the processes of representation and referral that govern it. Thus, François does not urge Marguerite to forget his earthly carnal presence but to remember from it *only* that which *represents* God's creation *non-sensorially*. After all, the poem does not enact a mystical, grace-like conferral of divine memory on Marguerite, nor does she ever transcend sensorial remembrance of her brother. Even if one reads the final prayer as miming the action of grace, it does not bring up a divine memory as reactivated by God. In François's understanding of divine memory, the senses and the representational function they have in carnal memory are still required. Thus we cannot speak of a radical divide between two forms of memory. Remembering the divine within ourselves always requires *memento mori*, carnal remembrance of our mortality.

These dynamics of memory finally allow us to assess human participation and agency in *La Navire*. By its very nature, memory is a paradoxical form of agency. On the one hand, the Western tradition developed an elaborate *ars memorativa*, i.e., exercises in controlling and using memory. On the other hand, we have no real control over forgetting.⁷⁵ This makes the imperative by mystical writers such as Briçonnet—and, by extension, his spokespersons François and Charlotte—to forget all carnal memories so paradoxical. While on many levels they seek to obliterate human agency and to value divine intervention, they urge Marguerite to initiate and actively participate in the one mental process that is ultimately far beyond our control. As Russell points out, “forgetting is something of a mystery” and thus very much dependent on a divine gift, or act of grace, rather than our own capacities (*Transformations*, p. 11).

La Navire fully explores the paradoxical nature of participation in memory processes. The conflict is twofold: on the one hand, between Marguerite's sensorial remembrance of her brother and François's idea of knowing God as a non-sensorial presence in our memory, and, on the other hand, between François's understanding of this divine memory as necessarily obliterating all traces of self-consciousness, including earthly memories, and the need for the self's agency and will to first use (in the exercise of *memento mori*) and then forget all carnal memories in order to realize this divine remembrance. What emerges from this analysis,

⁷⁵ Russell, *Transformations*, p. 10. For medieval *ars memorativa*, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.

however, is a picture of the text that grants a much greater role to human agency and participation than has generally been recognized. Rather than an agonistic struggle between the carnal and the spiritual, as *La Navire* is often understood to be, and in which Marguerite's failure to fully abandon earthly sensorial memory tragically confirms François's position that only God's grace can redeem humankind's fallen state and reactivate divine memory, the text's poetic dialogism valorizes human participation and agency at all levels of mourning, remembrance, and spiritual transcendence. This conclusion concerning *La Navire* holds true also for the *Dialogue*. While the latter text seems so much a story of failed transcendence that tragically stresses humankind's sinful state and weakness, reiterating the importance of divine intervention, we have seen that from its poetic and dialogical dynamics there emerges a more complex picture that suggests the role of individual self-awareness and human agency in the processes of mourning and spiritual transcendence. With respect to both poems, then, it is possible to advance a more nuanced and less dualistic understanding of their meaning, which at first sight seems to reiterate the familiar Pauline dichotomy between carnal and spiritual, and its uni-directional movement of transcendence from the one to the other. Marguerite's skilful literary and mimetic handling of the form of the poetic dialogue allows her to raise crucial questions—unique for mystical and spiritual texts dealing with death, mortality, and transcendence—about what humans can *do*.

LES PRISONS' POETICS OF CONVERSION

Cynthia Skenazi

In some ways, the publication of Marguerite de Navarre's *Prisons* recalls the poem's narrative of entrapment and liberation. Two secretaries transcribed the text, after which their respective copies were incorporated into two different manuscripts that were forgotten in the Bibliothèque nationale de France for three and a half centuries. The first manuscript contains Marguerite's later works; the second one bears a title added by an unknown reader: *L'Heptaméron ou histoires des amants fortunés, des nouvelles de la Reyne de Navarre Marguerite de Valois. Un poème en trois livre [sic] intitulé Les Prisons par la mesme Reyne*.¹ In 1896, Abel Lefranc published the first critical edition of *Les Prisons*, based on this second copy, which offers a more accurate version of the text.² In 1880, Le Roux de Lincy and Montaiglon had already included a number of excerpts from *Les Prisons* in their second edition of the *Heptaméron*, but a superficial reading had led them to conclude that Marguerite was not the author. They noted that the words "*par la mesme Reyne*" are crossed out in the title of the manuscript. Moreover, an inscription written in ink by different readers appears on the back of *Les Prisons*' first folio—"Pour Phillender – Cristus passus est pro nobis. Ce p[rese]nt livre appartient à Dame Marye Philandrier"—with two more inscriptions figuring on the second folio—"Pour Philander," "Pour ma seur Marie Philander. G [?] Philander."³ Lefranc argued that the queen's name was erased from the title at a later date, and that the manuscript belonged to the architect and humanist Guillaume Philander (1505–65), who was part of the queen's circle of protégés; Philander then gave the book to his sister, hence Le Roux de Lincy's and Montaiglon's confusion concerning the question of authorship. Lefranc also pointed out *Les Prisons*' numerous similarities with Marguerite's other works and hailed the text as her "opus maius," "the crowning achievement

¹ Respectively, BnF, fr. 24,298 and fr. 1522. See Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva, 1978), pp. 59–66. All further references come from this edition.

² Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Dernières Poésies*, ed. Abel Lefranc (Paris, 1896).

³ *L'Heptaméron des nouvelles de très-haute et très-illustre princesse Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre*, ed. Antoine Le Roux de Lincy and Anatole de Montaiglon, 4 vols. (Paris, 1880), 1:152–65.

of her poetic career."⁴ Since then, critics have unanimously endorsed this view and speak of *Les Prisons* as Marguerite's "spiritual testament," her "grand œuvre in the alchemical sense," a "summa" which "incorporates into one work the themes, topoi, and strategies" of her lyrical output.⁵

Les Prisons, Marguerite's longest poem, consists of 4928 decasyllabic verses divided into three books of increasing length (618, 1906, and 3214 lines respectively). The work describes the quest for freedom of a figure named Amy (Friend/Lover), whose journey leads him through a series of allegorical prisons epitomizing the deceptive pleasures of the world. *Les Prisons*' longest part focuses on the protagonist's spiritual enlightenment and celebrates his loving union with God; there follows an account of the Christian deaths of four of Marguerite's close relatives, and a meditation on the gulf separating *Tout* (God) and *Rien* (human beings). Amy concludes his story by claiming that true freedom is to be contained in God's love. The date and the circumstances of the composition of *Les Prisons* remain uncertain, but Marguerite was certainly at work on the poem during her stay in the priory at Tusson, because she describes the final illness and death of François I on 31 March 1547. Although Marguerite was not with her brother when he died, and the details of her account are drawn from Pierre Du Chastel's *Oraison funèbre* delivered on 23 May 1547, it is likely that she had a copy of the eulogy at an earlier date. For Pierre Jourda, her serenity when she speaks of her deceased brother suggests that she wrote *Les Prisons* several months after the king's death.⁶ Parts of the poem could, however, have been written prior to this event.

Les Prisons exemplifies the ways in which an exceptionally learned female author related to the literary and religious culture of her milieu, and confirms the lasting influence on her of Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux. The poem's promotion of a devotion based on the Bible as the sole source of true doctrine, its emphasis on faith, and its perspective on confession are indicative of the religious views of Marguerite's circle. In addition, *Les Prisons* bears the imprint of a wide range of philosophical, religious, and literary readings. Rather than cancel each other out,

⁴ *Dernières Poésies*, ed. Lefranc, pp. xlvī–l.

⁵ *Dernières Poésies*, ed. Lefranc, p. xlv; Michel Dassonville, "Le Testament spirituel de Marguerite de Navarre," in *From Marot to Montaigne: Essays on French Renaissance Literature*, ed. Raymond C. La Charité, *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 19 supplement 1 (1972), 109–24; Robert D. Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry* (Washington, D.C., 1986), p. 243.

⁶ Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978), 1:583.

these various influences involve each other and open up the possibility of simultaneous readings. This polyphonic dimension is especially striking in relation to the prison image that underlies the work as a whole, since it combines two broad and interconnected traditions: the tradition of idealism extending from Plato to Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, which is central to Christianity, and that of medieval love poetry. In both traditions, the prison is a closed and open "system."⁷ Within a Platonic or Christian frame, the world is a prison for those who are obsessed with wordly goods and do not realize that true freedom is associated with love for a higher, spiritual "principle" or for God.⁸ At the same time, as Briçonnet makes clear in a letter to Marguerite, the prison image paradoxically suggests freedom because it evokes God's love for his creation and human beings' love for God:

Prison d'amour est ouverte. S'en vad et vient qui veult. Amour est la portiere et clef de la prison d'amour, qu'il ayme ceux qui l'ayment: "Ego dilligentes me dilligo". C'est à dire qu'il [Dieu] tient en prison ceux qui l'ont prins prisonnier, se captivent et emprisonnent l'ung l'autre, disans chascun d'eux: "J'ay trouvé ce que mon ame ayme. Je l'ay tenu, tiens et ne laysseray jamais". Trop plus est la prison puissante du Tout-Puissant que la nostre... Car l'on enferme songneusement ce que l'on ayme et selon l'amour est la solitude.⁹

Courtly literature elaborates on similar antitheses: for the *amant parfait*, love represents an allegorical prison but is also an experience of freedom.¹⁰ Building on these literary, philosophical, and religious traditions, Marguerite's poem opens the prison image up to a broader meditation on God, love, and freedom.

As epitomized by the complexity of its central image, *Les Prisons* capitalizes on the persistent ambiguity of a metaphoric language irreducible to singularity of meaning; it dramatizes a world of dissemblance, empty forms, and illusory appearances that the protagonist demystifies but to which his story is bound. This is a consistent and controlled strategy by which Marguerite forces us to seek a truth that becomes valuable only when it is found, or rather produced. The metaphors we encounter can

⁷ See Cottrell, *Grammar*, pp. 244–47.

⁸ Cottrell, *Grammar*, p. 245.

⁹ Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79), 2:289.

¹⁰ Cottrell, *Grammar*, pp. 245–46.

be taken as glittering signs of God's presence or as dangerous fictions which lead us astray. *Les Prisons* recounts the effort to unsettle all complacencies, to leave behind familiar shores, to shed aesthetic gardens of self-absorption, to expose oneself to the possibilities and dangers of error. Interpretation, I will argue, generates the meaning of this quest and its mode of expression. In this respect, *Les Prisons* is engaged in a reflection on the power of literature to engender the reader's quest for God's love.

Conversion

Les Prisons is the retrospective story of a man who has reached self-understanding in God and looks back at the illusions and follies that held him captive for so long. The conclusion of this quest—its endpoint—is also its beginning. Marguerite's text addresses the relation between theology and poetics: by the end of his journey, Amy has moved away from a poetics of reification—epitomized by the series of his prisons—to embrace a poetics of "translation," and has become the scribe of the words that God dictates within him. Conversion—involving death of a former self and spiritual rebirth—is the organizing and poetic principle of the work as a whole. This experience introduces a radical discontinuity between a *then* and a *now*. Before his spiritual enlightenment, Amy's views on human life were partial, confused, and problematic; by the end of his journey to God, he has come to see himself and the world around him from a perspective of certainty and transcendence. His confession is a systematic rejection of convictions and beliefs he once held; it is a testimony to the necessity of the extinction of a false self if one aspires to an authentic life. It is because of this rupture in the sequence of his life that his story is definitive and concluded.

Saint Augustine's *Confessions* set the pattern for all subsequent Christian narratives of conversion. Following this example, Amy's confession is in part the story of how *Les Prisons* came to be written, and his repeated addresses to Amye at the opening of each of the three books create a chronological illusion that leads us to understand the traveler's conversion as preceding the telling of his life. In addition to Saint Augustine's account, Marguerite certainly had in mind the *Divine Comedy* (a work strongly influenced by the *Confessions*), for she had admired Dante's poem since her youth. In 1547, moreover, Jean de Tournes published a new edition of Dante's *Commedia*, with a preface by Maurice Scève. Marguerite's *Prisons* alludes several times to the *Divine Comedy*: Amy has read Dante's work to Amye and urges her to read it again (p. 131, vv. 1041–46). Like Saint

Augustine's and Dante's journeys to God, Marguerite's poem is a meditation on the ineffable joy of Christian revelation; it demonstrates how an apparently unique and personal experience of conversion is, from the perspective of eternity, a manifestation of God's love for all human beings. Along with the conventional link between love and poetry, Marguerite's poem focuses on the connection between love and interpretation, insofar as God's love becomes the exegetical principle by which the ambiguities of human language disappear. This relationship, which is equally apparent in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, had also been emphasized by Saint Augustine in his *De Doctrina Christiana*.¹¹

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante follows Beatrice whose name suggests the redemption granted by Jesus, whereas in *Les Prisons*, the male figure Amy shows a female character Amye the path to divine love. This inversion may suggest Marguerite's conviction that all human beings qualify equally for salvation, regardless of any secondary factors, such as gender. As Saint Paul stated in his Epistle to the Galatians: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."¹² Yet, as we shall see, salvation is principally a matter of God's grace; in addition, like the pilgrimages of Saint Augustine and Dante, Amy's itinerary stresses the danger of falling under the spell of vices. Marguerite's protagonist is especially vulnerable to the three concupiscences condemned by Saint John in his First Epistle: "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches" (1 John 2:16). At the end of Book II, an old man refers to this passage to urge Amy to flee these vices:

Gardez vous bien, de toutes voz puyssances,
Des deux premiers qui sont concupiscences,
L'ung de la chair, remply d'ordure et vice,
L'autre des yeux, apportant avarice;
Le tiers, orgueil de vie, et le plus faulx
De tous les troys, engendrant plus de maulx
Que cuer ne peult penser, ne bouche dire;
.....
Voyez Saint Jehan, dedans sa Canonique,
Commant il dit que en la subjection
Des troys puyssans va en perdition
Le monde . . . (pp. 131–32; vv. 1025–31, 1058–61)

¹¹ See Cottrell, *Grammar*, pp. 11–18.

¹² Gal. 3:28. Quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

Book I of *Les Prisons* is about the dangers of earthly love and *concupiscentia carnis*; Book II unmasks the evil of *concupiscentia oculorum* and pride of life; Book III starts with a satire of the presumption of intellectual knowledge, *concupiscentia mentis*. As we shall see, these vices have a natural propensity to generate other sins. *Les Prisons* therefore continues Marguerite's constant meditation on the gap that separates Nothing from All (the creation from its Creator). Amy's confession tells the story of a soul's journey to overcome fear and despair. To discouragement, the poem opposes hope and confidence in God. Amy's transformation is the expression of Marguerite's unshakable trust in God's love for all human beings. As the poem makes clear, faith in Christ alone saves. Faith is a gift from God that enlightens the mind with truth and fills the heart with love. Sharing these certitudes—writing *Les Prisons*—is a sign of true devotion and therefore of charity. *Les Prisons* consequently fully complies with the two fundamental laws of Christianity spelled out by Jesus himself in the gospels:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets.¹³

Book I. Concupiscentia Carnis

Following Saint Augustine's and Dante's journeys to God, Amy's quest for true freedom is marked by broken paths, detours, and a number of failed conversions. The first of these unsuccessful attempts to reform his life appears in Book I, which tells the story of Amy's passion for Amye. The poet's erotic love for his mistress is an allegorical prison that he has built for himself; it has the shape of a tower of stone, brick, and wood. Amy cherishes his captivity and kisses the door and the fence of his jail. He finds chains and enslavement in his lady's perfect physical beauty and the fire of passion becomes a hell of torment, yet he takes pleasure in his suffering. So great is his joy to spend his life in solitary confinement that he defends the dungeon against the attacks of the sun. He is held so fast in prison that he does not know what freedom is. On several occasions, he repairs the fissures made by sunbeams until he finds himself

¹³ Matt. 22:37–40; cf. Mark 12:29–31 and Luke 10:27.

surrounded one night by a fire that destroys the tower. The fire is not that of his passion but stems from the sun. Looking through the window, he sees Amye throwing down firebrands on his head, and he is burned to cinders. Despite his lady's fickleness and her desire to torment him, he persists in loving her, but the sun condemns Amye. Amy finally decries the passion that held him captive for over ten years.

Amy's criticism takes the form of a satire of the conventions of courtly love. All the metaphors and commonplaces of this literary genre (love's fatal glance, the *parfait amant's* submission to his beloved, his poetic idealization of her physical perfection, his obsessive love, and the beloved's cruelty) now appear to him as seductive traps. Amy sees the hypocrisy of this language from the theological endpoint of his journey. The fire that ravages his tower destroys his aesthetic illusions; he now finds his prison ugly and dirty, and the chains that he used to compare to precious jewels look to him like coarse ropes. Amy's change of heart in Book I provides Marguerite with the opportunity both to criticize and to emulate contemporary love collections, thereby demonstrating her literary skills. There are echoes of *Le Roman de la Rose* and of Antoine Héroët's *Parfaicte amyie* (1542) in Amy's account of his tower of love. In this respect, *Les Prisons* creates conditions for change by neither an absolute negation nor a complete break with a given poetics, but by appropriating and conserving the rhetoric it seeks to unmask and replace. As Marguerite was well aware, effective criticism is dialectical, not oppositional. Amy especially stresses a neo-Platonic blending of carnal passion with love for God that is so striking in Héroët's work.¹⁴ He speaks of his tower of love as "un plaisant terrestre paradis" (p. 78, v. 88), "mon salut" (p. 78, v. 89), and again as "mon paradis" (p. 84, v. 269). Such expressions represent a distortion of love's spiritual meaning. Amy's accusation directly targets Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (a prestigious inheritor of the medieval rhetoric of courtly love), which was so fashionable in Marguerite's time. References to love as a "doulce poison" (p. 90, v. 426), paradoxes, such as the icy fire, used to express the contradictory effects of love, all the Petrarchan conceits and imagery which proliferated in French love poetry from the 1540s on, now appear to Amy as blatant lies.

¹⁴ Antoine Héroët, *La Parfaicte Amye*, ed. C. Hill (Exeter, 1981). On Héroët and Marguerite, see Robert Cottrell, "The Poetics of Transparency in Evangelical Discourse: Marot, Briçonnet, Marguerite de Navarre, Héroët," in *Lapidary Inscriptions: Renaissance Essays for Donald A. Stone, Jr.*, ed. Barbara C. Bowen and Jerry C. Nash (Lexington, Ky., 1991), pp. 33–44.

Looking back at this sequence of his life, Amy realizes that, like Pygmalion madly in love with his statue of a beautiful woman, he worshipped his own representation of Amye. He was obsessed with himself rather than with his beloved and was, in his own words, “prisonnier de moymesmes” (p. 86, v. 321). This refusal to go beyond oneself was a self-petrification, epitomized by Amy’s tower of love and his repeated efforts to repair the cracks endangering his solitary confinement. The threat of Amy’s first prison is the threat of narcissism, and ultimately of idolatry, the very sin that the poet-lover of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* confesses in his final prayer to the Virgin. Amy similarly observes that he loved Amye “non comme creature, / Mais comme ung Dieu” (p. 108, vv. 324–25), and at the end of Book II, an old man tells him that “cest amour se peult dire ydolatre” (p. 116, v. 563). In Marguerite’s time, the word “idolâtre” retained its Greek meaning of *eidolon* (image): Amy was led astray chasing earthly, hence illusory and deceptive images of love.

Speaking of Laura no longer as the infinitely beloved, Petrarch calls her a “Medusa” in the last poem of the cycle: “Medusa et l’error mio m’àn fatto un sasso.”¹⁵ Petrarch was turned to stone because of idolatry, but he at least had some secular consolation, for his portrait as a weeping lover was immune to the ravages of time since stone lasts forever. In *Les Prisons*, on the other hand, fire ravages Amy’s dungeon of love, but the edifice was doomed to crumble because its foundations were built on sand (p. 90, vv. 427–34).¹⁶ Although the tower was burned, it ultimately fell prey to Time, which destroys all human enterprises. Amy’s next prison in Book II warns us again not to mistake the shadowy and insubstantial domain of temporal existence for the true revelation to come.

Book II. Concupiscentia Carnis, Concupiscentia Oculorum, Superbia

The destruction of the tower of love marks the beginning of Amy’s new life, but instead of bringing renewal and freedom, the protagonist’s escape turns into a parody of a real conversion, a tragic fall into matter. In Book II, Amy’s second prison may be without bars and restraints, but it proves to be as confining as the first and even more dangerous. Guided by the sun, the poet marvels at the wonders of nature, he admires the harmony of the

¹⁵ “Medusa and my error have made me a stone,” Petrarch, *Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 583, v. 111.

¹⁶ The reference is to Matt. 7:26–27.

landscape, the diversity of the animal realm, and the harmonious movement of the celestial bodies. His aesthetic enthusiasm recalls his previous attachment to Amye in Book I and encourages him to see the presence of the divine everywhere. Marguerite's poems often refer to the biblical notion of Nature as the Book of God, and Book III of *Les Prisons* later expands this motif in a mystical perspective (pp. 160–61, vv. 733–45).¹⁷ In a letter to the queen dated 5 March 1522, Briçonnet similarly wrote:

O infinitude de bonté et, par ce, boniffiant tout estre, et n'est creature en l'air, eaue, feu ou terre, ayant vie sensible ou vegetative, ou qui seulement eust estre sans vie, que voz rayons de bonté ne penetre, les gardans et conseruans en vous qui est leur estre! De tous estes la forme et substantifique forme, tout formant et donnant estre. (*Correspondance*, 1:188–89)

Yet in *Les Prisons*, the natural world that ought to point Amy towards God serves only to blind him. Amy falls into the trap of a literal reading of God's ubiquitous presence in all things and thinks that since God is life, therefore nature, the soul, and the world are identical. By ignoring God's transcendental dimension, he confuses the Creator with his creation and worships a material representation of the divine.

Having left the countryside, the traveler reaches a wealthy city; the rapid pace of his journey spatially visualizes a movement of conquest insofar as ambition and the lust for possession now dominate Amy's myriad observations and activities. From antiquity, the denunciation of the artifices and dangers of urban life had been a commonplace.¹⁸ Marguerite's elaboration on this motif is also inspired by her strong, ironic personal observations of the striking differences between moral and religious ideals, on the one hand, and practice, on the other hand. As he enters the city, Amy admires the castles, the gardens, and the palaces; he immediately wishes to acquire land and to build a thousand houses because these magnificent buildings epitomize their owner's financial and social accomplishments. It is hard to forget that François I built seven palaces, that he had royal architects, patronized the publication of several architectural treatises, and was the dedicatee of many of them.¹⁹ Countless members of the European wealthy classes shared the king's passion for building, yet the price

¹⁷ Barbara Marczuk-Szwed, *L'Inspiration biblique dans l'œuvre de Marguerite de Navarre: poésie-théâtre* (Cracow, 1992), pp. 91–93.

¹⁸ See *Les Prisons*, ed. Glasson, p. 270.

¹⁹ Guillaume Philander, for instance, whose name appears on the manuscript of the *Prisons*, dedicated part of his commentaries on Vitruvius's *Architecture* to François I as well as to Marguerite.

to pay to satisfy this lust for immortal glory was high. Amy observes—in passing—that architecture often generates “procès, debatz et guerres” (p. 102, v. 160): debts, trials, bankruptcy, tensions with workers, unfinished constructions, such were the daily worries of Marguerite’s own brother and his entourage.²⁰

Despite these difficulties, Amy is nonetheless convinced that palaces and castles are “paradis de delices / Dont les beaultez font ignorer les vices” (p. 102, vv. 147–48). His reaction highlights the seductions and pitfalls of a *société du spectacle*, in which man is obsessed with “the pride in riches,” in Saint John’s words (1 John 2:16). In a world that defines the individual in terms of ownership, pride persuades men of their right to succeed by every possible means. Book II unmasks the pursuit of profit, the corruption of lawyers and judges, the dishonesty and greed of merchants, the abuses of power by mighty princes, the ambition of kings. Once again, these remarks belong to a long tradition of moral commonplaces, but Marguerite was in a good position to measure their effect among her peers. Amy’s encounter with members of the Church confirms many contemporary observations, including those of Clément Marot, François Rabelais, and Martin Luther: priests sell indulgences in an exchange of money for redemption, wealthy patrons seek personal glory through their charitable donations, hypocrisy and cynicism replace true devotion, religion is about rituals rather than faith, and nobody cares about reading the Bible. Corruption permeates every level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and religion is but a tool for personal profit. Protestants and Catholics had the same indignant reaction against the misuses of religious practice.

As Briçonnet wrote to Marguerite of the Church in 1521, “la challeur d’avarice, ambition et voluptueuse vie a deseché son eaue de vie, doctrine et exemplarité” (*Correspondance*, 1:85). Amy’s stay at court provides further evidence of the pervasive presence of these vices. The court—the queen’s own social milieu—epitomizes the godless reign of selfishness and wordly pleasures. In France, Philibert de Vienne’s *Le Philosophe de Court* (Lyon, 1547) and Claude Chappuy’s *Discours de la Court* (Paris, 1543) testify to the influence of Castiglione’s famous *Book of the Courtier* on Marguerite’s contemporaries. Indeed, Castiglione’s dialogue was a best-seller in Marguerite’s time; first published in 1528, many French, Spanish, German, and English versions of the work circulated throughout 16th-century Europe.²¹

²⁰ See Cynthia Skenazi, *Le Poète architecte en France: Constructions d’un imaginaire monarchique* (Paris, 2003), p. 164.

²¹ See Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier* (University Park, Penna., 1996).

Amy fulfills all the requirements for a successful career as outlined by Castiglione: he learns how to behave with elegance and grace; excels in sports (particularly in the martial arts); studies rhetoric and music; develops an appreciation for dance; participates in feasts, tournaments, and banquets. His youthful and handsome appearance is, of course, *de rigueur* in social entertainments in which women set the tone. These qualities do not make Amy a role model, quite the contrary. His ambition and lack of moral principles are however representative of many courtiers' behavior. Turning Castiglione's neo-Platonic ethical and religious ideals upside down, Amy uses his good physical appearance and newly acquired good manners for his own profit and delights in the sensual pleasures of an easy lifestyle. Finally, like any good courtier, he perfects his rhetorical skills, but instead of using his eloquence for the common good, he becomes an expert in flattery and dissimulation in order to satisfy his personal lust for power and to climb the social ladder.

Once again, an outside force makes Amy realize that he has built a new prison for himself. An old man who calls himself Amateur de Science suddenly appears, and it becomes clear that his age is a sign of wisdom. He urges Amy to flee the world, for as Saint John wrote, "the world with its lust is passing away, but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17). The old man's admonitions recall Marguerite's *Discord estant en l'homme par la contrariété de l'esprit et de la chair et paix par vie spirituelle*, with its meditation on Saint Paul's denunciation of the body as a locus of corruption and a seat of wordly pleasures:

Qui suit la Chair, à DIEU ne sçauroit plaire:
 Qui suit la Chair, il est à DIEU contraire:
 Qui suit la Chair, il n'est point filz de DIEU.²²

In *Les Prisons*, the old man warns the traveler of the danger of the "troys / Cruelz tyrantz" (p. 130, vv. 1021–22) ruling the world. At first, these tyrants seem to be Ambition, Hypocrisy, and Carnal Pleasure, but Avarice soon becomes a predominant figure and Hypocrisy is downgraded to the status of an attendant of Ambition. The old man associates these vices with the three beasts of Dante's *Inferno* (the leopard, the lion, and the wolf, epitomizing, respectively, carnal pleasure, pride, and avarice, p. 131, v. 1045).²³ In the *Divine Comedy*, these three beasts which block the wayfarer's path

²² *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses, tresillustre Royne de Navarre*, ed. Ruth Thomas (New York, Paris, and The Hague, 1970), p. 76.

²³ Dante Alighieri, *La Divine Comédie*, ed. Henri Longnon (Paris, 1966), p. 12, vv. 31–34.

are not sins but dispositions toward sin, and they afflict every man, without exception, to a greater or lesser degree. Amateur de Science then advises Amy to read history and ancient philosophy and to study the Bible in order to become a virtuous man. So great is Amy's desire to follow the old man's advice that he leaves the world at once and abandons his former self. Yet it is not enough to know what must be done, one must also know how to do it. As Saint Paul states in his Epistle to the Romans:

For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. (Rom. 7:18–19)

In the same way, Marguerite's traveler misinterprets his mentor's claim that history, philosophy, and the Bible can cure the soul. He becomes a scholar and falls into an intellectual form of pride: the lust for knowledge.

Book III. Concupiscentia Mentis

Amy's tireless intellectual activities at the opening of Book III parallel his erratic travels around the world at the beginning of Book II. Night and day, he reads; like a sponge, he absorbs as much learning as he can. His ambitious program extends well beyond the old man's recommendations. Amy becomes acquainted with philosophy (p. 136, vv. 37–48), poetry (pp. 136–37, vv. 49–64), law (pp. 137–38, vv. 65–84), mathematics (p. 138, vv. 85–108), music (pp. 138–39, vv. 109–14), medicine (pp. 139–40, vv. 115–68), history (pp. 141–42, vv. 169–96), rhetoric (pp. 142–43, vv. 197–228), and theology (pp. 143–46, vv. 229–328). To this extensive list, he adds cosmography (p. 148, vv. 364–69). Amy's encyclopedic interests echo the humanists' enthusiasm for learning, which informs many texts of Marguerite's contemporaries. Interestingly, the enumeration of his fields of study does not follow any order: it neither recalls the hierarchical principle of the *scala intellectualis* (an ascent leading from lower to higher levels of understanding), which appears frequently in Renaissance literature, nor does it conform to the seven liberal arts required for a Bachelor of Arts.²⁴ Despite

²⁴ For his first degree—the Bachelor of Arts—a student was required to master the seven liberal arts, which consisted of three language arts, the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), and four quantitative arts, the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy). Having left the Faculty of Arts, he could then enter one of three Faculties, in order of respective prestige: Law, Medicine, Theology. These last three disciplines are also part of Amy's studies.

the number of lines dedicated to theology, this discipline is but one of the many interests of the speaker, rather than the culmination of his scholarly investigations. Indeed, cosmography—not theology—is the last field of research mentioned. It soon becomes clear that human knowledge cannot give Amy access to true freedom. The long list of the disciplines he eagerly studies visually conveys the feeling of an accumulation of inert materials. Moreover, the contradictions of the books he reads stress the weakness of reason and understanding. In every field of knowledge, human language leads to dissimulation and error because it eludes the possibility of univocal meaning; words are intrinsically ambiguous and shifting.

Amy nonetheless enjoys his scholarly retreat, which he finds a delightful paradise, well protected from the world (p. 150, vv. 421–22). In his enthusiasm to master all the sciences, he does not realize that God should be the beginning and end of all studies. He foolishly thinks that God rewards man's actions, and is unaware of the importance of grace. Unknowingly, he builds another solitary place of confinement: a white-walled temple whose pillars are made of books. At the top of this structure, he places the Bible as the goal of all studies (p. 144, vv. 272–73) and crowns the edifice with laurel. "Plus on cuyde sçavoir, plus on devient ygnorant et aveugle," Briçonnet wrote to Marguerite on 6 March 1522 (*Correspondance*, 1:178). Amy's intellectual quest proves to be a sterile pursuit and even represents a form of transgression because Amy conceives truth in human terms. As Gérard Defaux has observed, this anti-intellectualist perspective, which finds its inspiration in Saint Paul's and Saint John's Epistles as well as in Saint Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, was especially alive in Marguerite's evangelical circle.²⁵ Amy's thirst for learning is a manifestation of *cuyder* (false belief) and of the evil curiosity from which God sought to protect man by forbidding Adam to eat the fruit of the tree of Knowledge. Amy's confidence in the human mind to find truth is an act of pride insofar as it neglects to take account of man's fallen condition. Knowledge is good if it leads to God; uninformed by grace and faith, it becomes an allegorical prison:

O prisonnier dedans la lettre morte
Par ung Cuyder qui te fermoit la porte,
Tant qu'en lisant plus de lettre apprenoyis

²⁵ Gérard Defaux, *Le Curieux, le glorieux et la sagesse du monde dans la première moitié du XVI^e siècle: L'Exemple de Panurge (Ulysse, Démosthène, Empédocle)* (Lexington, Ky., 1982), pp. 79–107.

Et meins au vray sçavoir tu parvenois,
 Quelle clarté t'a l'Esprit revelé,
 Qui dans la lettre es encloz et cellé? (p. 198, vv. 1905–10)

In response to a letter of Marguerite dated from the end of November 1522 and signed “la trop en corps Marguerite,” Briçonnet commented on a passage of Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians (5:19), alluding to bodies too much concerned with wordly matters:

Madame, plusieurs sortes de gens sont trop en corps. Il en est qui telz se montrent et en font les œuvres dont parle Monsieur saint Pol au V^e chapitre ès Galathes, où il descript les œuvres de la chair et du corps . . . Ilz sont trop en corps estans charnelz et metant entierement leur plaisir, cure et sollicitude. . . . Madame, il en est d’autres qui, pouzè qu’ilz aient non seulement leur ame predominant à leur corps et l’esperit à leur ame, ne sentent rien du monde et, combien que cheminans en la terre et en la chair, toutes-fois leurs œuvres sont spirituelles. . . . Neantmoings sont trop en corps, non materiel mais spirituelz, quant ilz abusent de leur grace et par presumption veullent sans helles voller pour cuider comprendre l’incomprehensible. (*Correspondance*, 1:223–27)

The Fourfold Method of Biblical Exegesis

Briçonnet’s comment may help us to see Amy’s itinerary from his first prison to the third one as a series of different perspectives on the relationship between body, soul, and salvation. Amy’s journey represents a type of education founded on the reading of the Bible, that closely follows the then commonly applied fourfold method of biblical exegesis. In the tower of love, Amy’s exclusive point of reference is his senses and he does not distinguish the visible realm from the spiritual path to which it can lead. He takes the letter for the spirit and is a prisoner of a literal understanding of events, as he himself later acknowledges: “Velà commant, enfermé dans la lettre, / En liberté je pensoys du tout estre” (p. 146, vv. 329–30). Later on, he realizes that, in Saint Paul’s words, “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). Leaving his first place of confinement, he discovers the wonders of nature at the beginning of Book II and favors an allegorical reading of the world built on the hidden, rather than on the visible. The wise old man’s speech at the end of Book II embodies the tropological reading of the Scriptures; he converts Saint Paul’s admonition into moral principles and urges Amy to leave the world at once. Amy’s final revelation of God’s love, to which I shall return shortly, represents the fourth, highest, and transcendental reading—the anagogical or mystical—the eschatological dream of Christianity.

The distinction between these four senses depends on an act of interpretation, not on an intrinsic separation of truth and lies. The motif of the sun provides a suggestive way to see how Marguerite's poem elaborates on the various levels in a polyphonic perspective. In a letter to Briçonnet dated 21 July 1523, Marguerite used the metaphor of light, ubiquitous among evangelical writers, to express her hope of being enlightened by faith in order to see the "vray soleil luisant, feu eschauffant et lumiere enluminant" (*Correspondance*, 2:53). Briçonnet had already answered her request in a previous letter. Using the same figurative language as the queen, he wrote:

Qui demande il veoit. Foy est grande et longue veue. . . il me semble que toute la vie du chrestien, lequel de soy comme de soy est aveugle, doit estre pour apprendre à veoir, rectifier et clarifier sa veue." (*Correspondance*, 1:182–83)

This remark is at the heart of *Les Prisons'* quest as a whole. In Book I, the sun destroys Amy's tower of love and the speaker understands this action literally. In Book II, the sun is again high in the sky at noon when the protagonist meets Amateur de Science. The old man speaks of the moral enslavement resulting from the engagement with a world based on appearances and of Amy's blindness to virtue; the sunbeams suggest the light of human understanding. This light is very different from the divine fire that frees Amy from his temple of books and presides over his union with God. Following Nicholas of Cusa among others, Briçonnet often speaks of the gap between human reason and spiritual contemplation of the divine in terms of light: "Sy le soleil créé se communique à toute creature capable de veoir et se donne à congnoistre, et neantmoins tous les yeulx ensemble ne sont suffisans de recevoir et endurer toute sa lumiere, pour la grandeur, excellence et plenitude d'icelle lumiere excédant toute capacité oculaire, trop plus superhabondamment se communique le vray soleil" (*Correspondance*, 1:26). Marguerite's *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (1531) has recourse to the same metaphor:

Quand le soleil d'une seule estincelle
Aveugle l'œil, sa grant lumiere cele:
Mais demandez à l'œil qu'il a senty;
Il dira tout; mais il aura menty.
Car aveuglé de petite lumière,
Il ne peult veoir la grant clarté entiere.²⁶

²⁶ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, in *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*, p. 21.

In the preface to his *Commentarii initiatorii in quatuor evangelia* (1522), Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples wrote similarly: "De même que l'immensité et la majesté de ce qu'il faut croire confondent l'intelligence humaine, la source de la lumière solaire blesse l'œil sensible; la première ne comprend pas, exactement comme le second est aveuglé."²⁷

As these quotations make clear, a human being is unable to see God or to speak of him. Like Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Lefèvre, and Briçonnet, Marguerite emphasizes the inadequacy of words when it comes to expressing the divine. Only through dissimilarities and approximations can human language suggest God's ineffable presence.²⁸

Revelation

Critics have often stressed the similarities between Clément Marot's and Marguerite de Navarre's religious and poetic views.²⁹ *Les Prisons* confirms this perspective: many aspects of Amy's quest for freedom evoke the search for Ferme Amour in *Le Temple de Cupido*. Both poets start their respective journeys by worshiping sensual pleasures and confusing *Eros* with *Caritas*. The more they travel, the further they find themselves from the true object of their desire: God's love. In both works, the attack against wordly temptations becomes a pretext for the poetic creation of "artificial paradises" built upon the cult of sensual pleasures. In both works also, the journey turns out to be an "itinerary" (from the Latin *intus*, inside) since both protagonists find their respective goals—Ferme Amour, true freedom—neither by their senses nor by their intellect but in and through their own heart and the reading of the Bible.³⁰ Marot and Marguerite capitalize on Saint Paul's observation in the first Epistle to the Corinthians: "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love (*caritas*)" (1 Cor. 13:13).

²⁷ Quoted in Guy Bedouelle, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'intelligence des Écritures* (Geneva, 1976), pp. 155–56.

²⁸ See Jan Miernowski, "La Parole entre l'Être et le Néant: *Les Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre aux limites de la poésie exégétique," *French Forum* 16 (1991), 261–84.

²⁹ Edwin M. Duval, "Marot, Marguerite et le chant du cœur: Formes lyriques et formes de l'intériorité," and Mary McKinley, "Marot, Marguerite de Navarre et 'L'Épître du Despourveu,'" in Clément Marot, "*Prince des poètes français*," 1496–1996: *Actes du Colloque international de Cahors-en-Quercy, 1996*, ed. Gérard Defaux and Michel Simonin (Paris, 1997), pp. 559–71 and 613–26.

³⁰ Clément Marot, *Le Temple de Cupido*, in *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux, 2 vols. (Paris, 1990–93), 1:219ff; *Les Prisons*, p. 152, III, vv. 495–98.

In the longest part of *Les Prisons*' Book III (and more broadly in the poem as a whole), faith determines a transformation of the problematic into the certain and the transcendent. Before his conversion, Amy is trapped by his own decisions and is never sure of the meaning of his actions; what he is remains obscure to him. Marguerite focuses on that border zone where human actions are hinged together with divine power. When Amy follows the disposition of his own ethos, he is the responsible cause of his actions, yet, at the same time, he seems to be a plaything in the hands of God; the two levels are inseparable. Just like faith, hope, and love, true freedom involves placing one's stake or wager on what is unknown and incomprehensible, risking oneself on a terrain that remains impenetrable, entering into a game not knowing whether it will bring success or doom. The most sincere prayer is still a chancy appeal to God, and only by his reply will Amy learn what being enraptured by divine love really involves and means. Like Adam with whom he identifies, Amy is saved by God's intervention, and the story of his liberation is described in explicitly biblical language. God's grace takes the dramatic form of a "Glesve trenchant, flamboyant, clair et beau," which frees Amy from the "cuyder vain et sot" of his temple of books (p. 151, vv. 462–65).³¹ God speaks to those who listen to him, and the voice of the prophets announcing his reign can still be heard: "Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears, but do not hear" (Jeremiah 5:21). In the same way, Ezekiel attacks those "who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear" (Ezekiel 12:2).

Amy's revelation is a transparent allusion, in particular, to Exodus's third chapter. The protagonist hears the voice that spoke to Moses from the burning bush: "Je suys qui suys, que œil vivant ne peult veoir" (p. 153, v. 520). These words made Moses aware of his own weakness and of the need for a spiritual understanding of God's commandments; they have the same effect on Amy. In addition, the notion of freedom, which informs *Les Prisons*, is at the heart of Exodus 3: the Lord orders Moses to rescue his people from the hands of the Egyptians who are oppressing them and to bring them to a land of freedom, flowing "with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). In a Christian perspective, God's concern over the suffering of his people in Exodus 3 prefigures Jesus's love for all human beings.

³¹ Glasson's edition of *Les Prisons*, p. 301, suggests several biblical references for this image, including Saint Paul's Epistles (Heb. 4:12 and Eph. 6:17).

Touched by this miracle, Amy understands that true freedom means to commit oneself wholly to the word of God, to be contained in God's love. Conversion is an act of divine grace, but this experience of spiritual renewal depends on a willingness to accept God's gift. The first step in this direction is the awareness of the gulf between Nothingness and All, between human being and Creator. Significantly, Amy's revelation occurs at the very moment he is reading a passage from the Gospel of Saint Luke, stating that Jesus favors the "petis" and "personnes basses" over the "sçavants, gentz doctes et discretz" because God reveals his secrets to the humble (p. 152, vv. 485–89).³²

From this point on, Amy is "inhabited" by the Word. This part—the longest of *Les Prisons* as a whole—draws from many sources, including Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Nicholas of Cusa, Briçonnet, and Lefèvre d'Étaples.³³ Jean Dagens also noted Marguerite's debt to Marguerite Porete, a beguine condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake in Valenciennes in 1310.³⁴ Marguerite was probably ignorant of Porete's name and knew *Le Miroir des âmes simples et anéanties* in an anonymous manuscript copy. Porete follows Jean de Meung's *Roman de la Rose* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* to deplore the blindness and perversity of human nature as it strays away from God. For Porete, as for Marguerite, the Scriptures reveal their hidden meaning to those who are humble of heart and who put their trust in God. To the learned, the Bible remains obscure insofar as reason can grasp neither the mystery nor the wisdom of God. Porete praises faith and the divine light that sets human beings free from prison; she ecstatically sings of her loving union with God. Interestingly, Porete's expression "Gentil Loing Près," to name Jesus, also appears in *Les Prisons* (p. 182, v. 1399). Despite these similarities however, Porete's allegorical characters (Soul, Reason, Love) and their somewhat scholastic and abstract discussions of specific religious questions stand in

³² Similarly, in Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, conversion is linked to Augustine's reading of a sentence from Saint Paul's Epistles, after hearing a child's voice chant repeatedly the words "tolle, lege, tolle, lege" ("take, read, take, read").

³³ See *Les Prisons*, ed. Glasson, pp. 11–57.

³⁴ Jean Dagens, "Le 'Miroir des simples âmes' et Marguerite de Navarre," in *La Mystique rhénane*, Travaux du Centre des Études Supérieures spécialisé d'histoire des religions de Strasbourg. Colloque de Strasbourg 1961 (Paris, 1963), pp. 281–89. Margaret Porete, *Le Miroir des âmes simples et anéanties*, ed. Max Hust de Longchamp (Paris, 1984). The queen of Navarre may have seen a copy of Porete's *Miroir* at the convent of the sisters of the Reform of Fontevault in Orléans, to which she extended her patronage. See Romana Guarnieri, "Il movimento del Libero Spirito," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 4 (1965), 490–91.

sharp contrast to *Les Prisons*' poetic design. Furthermore, some of Amy's major considerations—such as the separation between *Tout* (God) and *Rien* (human beings), which is a recurrent aspect of Marguerite's work—are absent from Porete's *Miroir des âmes simples*.

More than any text, the Bible is the true source of Amy's exultant celebration of God; it is the subject and the object of his ecstatic discourse, and it provides Marguerite with the language to convey the ineffable joy of Christian revelation. Critics have often commented on Marguerite de Navarre's poetry as a signifier of silence. Language is indeed unable to express God,³⁵ yet *Les Prisons*' final and longest section emphasizes the redundancy, the inexhaustible fertility of the divine word, reproducing itself and renewing its meaning. This endless flow of language recalls Briçonnet's way of answering Marguerite's letters: appropriating the queen's own figurative language, the bishop often twisted the wording of her metaphorical requests (longing for the sun and complaints of hunger and of thirst are among the most recurrent) to give them new meanings that seem to defy all logical contradictions. Likewise, Amy's praise of God is a labyrinth of words and sounds extending indefinitely through a proliferation of analogies, repetitions, and variations. Elaborations on God's statement "Je suys qui suys" (Exodus 3:14) and on words condensing Jesus's Law ("Mot," "Nom," "Loy," pp. 151–2, vv. 467–72; pp. 172–3, vv. 1087–106) are striking occurrences of this process of expansion. It is true that obsessive repetitions are typical of mystical texts, but one is prone to forget that this feature is also a recurrent aspect of the *rhétoriciens*' poetics. *Les Prisons* praises poetry, which allows human beings to see *per speculum in aenigmate*. Significantly, the divine fire burns Amy's third prison but spares the books that constitute its pillars. After the destruction of his Babel tower of paper, the speaker realizes that faith alone enables him to grasp the deeper meaning of human knowledge: God is the principle of understanding of every field of study.

The Fourth Prison

Amy's life story then seems to stop short and the poet engages in an extensive account of the deaths of four of Marguerite de Navarre's close relatives: her mother-in-law (Marguerite de Lorraine, Charles d'Alençon's

³⁵ See Cottrell, *Grammar*, p. 10.

mother), her first husband (Charles d'Alençon), her mother (Louise de Savoie), and her brother (François I) (pp. 207–30, vv. 2165–864). This section confirms the contribution of early modern women to funeral poetry and offered the queen an opportunity to excel in a fashionable rhetorical genre, yet its *raison d'être* does not seem obvious. For Pierre Jourda, the long description of the royal deaths constitutes an unnecessary digression and a proof of Marguerite's lack of artistic taste.³⁶ In contrast to this negative judgment, I would like to stress the crucial function of these eulogies in the context of the poetics of conversion that underlies *Les Prisons* as a whole.

According to Philippe Ariès, the attitude of a society toward its dead is closely connected with the way the specific group envisions itself and defines its values.³⁷ *Les Prisons'* four *récits de mort* represent an attempt by Marguerite to secure the immortality of her deceased relatives; furthermore, their commemoration is a way of advertising the political, religious, and ethical excellence of the queen's family. Such propaganda is particularly striking in the rehabilitation of Charles d'Alençon's role at the battle of Pavia in 1525 since his fleeing from this defeat with tragic consequences for the French was criticized by some contemporaries (p. 212, v. 2318). Likewise, François I's numerous love affairs become an opportunity for Marguerite to praise her brother's desire for amendment and his faith in God (pp. 225–29, vv. 2727–846). Indeed, all four defunct persons become role models for the living. Now a eulogy is a *memento mori* and Marguerite's poem reminds us that choices take on their true significance only when life is over; human actions are a kind of wager on God, for whose support one hopes. In a Christian and Platonic perspective, death represents Amy's liberation from his fourth and ultimate prison: that of his body. Plato's *Phaedrus* describes the soul as imprisoned in the body; a similar concept appears in biblical texts, especially in Saint Paul's distinction between the spirit and the flesh. For Saint Paul, death is the beginning of a new life, an experience of spiritual regeneration that frees human beings from sin and brings the soul close to Jesus (Rom. 6:4–7). "So it is with the resurrection of the dead," Saint Paul argues in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). In a letter to Marguerite dated 18 May 1522, Briçonnet used

³⁶ Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, 1:618.

³⁷ Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort* (Paris, 1977), p. 596.

the Pauline analogy of the body and the seed (1 Cor. 15:36) in a similar perspective:

comme dict saint Pol: "Insiens tu quod seminas non vivificatur nisi prius moriatur." Celuy est bien hors du sens qui cuide cuillir fruit de sa semence s'elle ne meurt premierement par mortification en terre. . . . Il fault mourir pour vie avoir, non de mort naturelle qui trop souvent mene à la perpetuelle, mais en vivant mourir, pour en mourant vivre. (*Correspondance*, 1:197)

Likewise, Marguerite's *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* praises death as the ultimate expression of Christian conversion:

Mort a donné à vie mort naïve.
Par ceste mort, moy morte reçoy vie;
Et au vivant par la mort suis ravie.
En vous je vy, quand en moy je suis morte,
Mort ne m'est plus que d'une prison porte.
Vie m'est mort; car par mort suis vivante.
Vie me rend bien triste et mort contente.³⁸

"Amour desir de mort donner nous doit," Marguerite claims in the same poem (1:54). This statement appears repeatedly in her works.³⁹ In *Les Prisons*, death is the beginning of a *vita nova*, and this conviction reminds Amy again of the abyss that separates human beings from God. After a meditation on the chasm between *Rien* and *Tout*, Amy concludes the poem by rephrasing Saint Paul's "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17):

. . . où l'Esprit est divin et vehement,
La liberté y est parfaictement. (p. 242, vv. 3213–14).

Confession

In contrast to this triumphant final line, the first words of *Les Prisons* strike a much humbler tone: "Je vous confesse, Amye tant aymée" (p. 75, v. 1), Amy says to his silent auditor. One might of course understand *confesser* in a medieval or Petrarchan tradition appropriate to a discussion of love; yet given *Les Prisons'* devotional orientation, it is impossible to ignore the verb's religious meaning. Interestingly, Amy confesses his sins

³⁸ *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*, 1:48.

³⁹ See *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses: Oraison de l'âme fidele*, 1:129–30; *La Comedie du desert*, 3:202; *Chansons spirituelles* XXIX, 3:155.

to Amye rather than to a priest. "Marguerite herself was not a professional theologian . . . [nor] an innovator of theological speculation," but an interested follower of the religious debates of her time. "Her privileged social position, which secured for her the best education and the conversation and correspondence of the most outstanding men," enabled her to be receptive to both new and old religious ideas and to incorporate them into her writings.⁴⁰ She was not in favor of a schism between Catholics and Protestants for religious and political reasons, but like other members of her circle, she used her literary works to promote a devotion based on faith and on the Scriptures. *Les Prisons'* representation of confession is a suggestive example of Marguerite's efforts to recover the essential meaning of the sacraments. Following the lead of her evangelical circle, she appropriated the practice of self-examination promoted by the German Reformation and adapted it to Amy's story.⁴¹

Confession to a priest had been a religious obligation since the Middle Ages, but Luther completely undermined this requirement. He argued that the practice tormented rather than consoled the Christian. "The truth of punishment causes contrition, and the truth of the promise causes consolation if it is believed," Luther proclaimed in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, "and by this faith a man merits forgiveness of sins."⁴² For Luther, what matters is faith, not confession. He insisted that confession must always result from the willed choice of the penitent; moreover, the sole purpose of this exercise of self-denunciation was to focus one's attention on the future rather than on past sins. Contrition is true if it bears fruit in a changed heart, spirit, disposition, and life. Following Luther, members of Marguerite's circle—including Lefèvre d'Étaples, Gérard Roussel, and Louis de Berquin—wanted Christians to confess their sins freely to God and to one another; they claimed that the remission of sins is granted by God alone (not the Church or a priest) and that confession is linked to the

⁴⁰ Gary Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre's Devotional Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 42; cf. pp. 116–25 and 163–77.

⁴¹ For a broader perspective on this question, on Luther's influence in France (especially on Lefèvre d'Étaples), and on the wide circulation of Luther's works in Paris, see Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, 2009), esp. 1:45–55, 66–67, 123–28; 2:565.

⁴² Martin Luther, *De Captivitate Babolynica Ecclesiae Praeludium* (1520), in *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 60 vols. (Weimar, 1883–1983), 6:45. English translation by Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, 1977), p. 57. Luther's book was censured by the Sorbonne in 1521.

promise of forgiveness.⁴³ Like Luther, they stressed that God is willing to hear every sinner's petition. In *Les Prisons*, Marguerite presents a similar perspective: Amy's repentance and desire for amendment go along with his unconditional faith in God. This expression of total confidence in God reappears in the *récits de mort*, in which three out of four of Marguerite's relatives make their confession (pp. 207–25). As Gary Ferguson notes, they are in addition anointed, receive their last Eucharistic viaticum on their deathbed, and "in true evangelical fashion, they are usually consoled also by the reading of the Passion."⁴⁴ In all these passages, Marguerite avoids controversial and practical matters (such as the role of the priest and the nature of his intervention), but stresses personal repentance and the crucial function of Christ's absolution.

Using a variety of metaphors, Luther teaches sinners that forgiveness is not a consequence of human virtues and of good works but depends on Christ alone, who acts as a mediator between human beings and God. God looks at Christ's righteousness, not at man's sinfulness; therefore, if one has faith—confidence, trust—in God, God assuredly forgives us. It is however essential to Luther's view of consolation that all traces of the psychology of merit be eliminated: sinners remain sinners, with all their weakness and corruption, but their sins are not counted against them because they believe in God. Likewise, in *Les Prisons*, the only disposition necessary to salvation is the desire for grace and the awareness of a human being's limitations and sinful nature.⁴⁵ Throughout Marguerite's poem, faith is a personal, loving, and trusting relationship with God. Although charity and the necessity of performing good works are valuable, they are but an expression of faith. Only faith can give human beings hope for redemption.⁴⁶

This notion has a direct impact on *Les Prisons'* design insofar as Amy's successive prisons dramatize the failure of a journey undertaken without God's help. The best for which a human being can hope is to ward off vices, to place his faith (his confidence, his trust) in God's mercy, and

⁴³ See Reid, *King's Sister*, 1:66, 252, 368, 531.

⁴⁴ Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, pp. 117–25. See on pp. 122–24, Ferguson's comments on the passage concerning Charles d'Alençon's death (*Les Prisons*, pp. 213–16, vv. 2358–2424). The dying duke refuses to consider extreme unction as a simple rite and emphasizes the true nature and proper use of a sacrament which brings healing.

⁴⁵ Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, pp. 19 and 57. Calvin emphasized the same elements; see Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:544.

⁴⁶ As Gary Ferguson notes, charity is "the means whereby God himself in Christ has come close to man, and works out his salvation for him" (*Mirroring Belief*, pp. 176–77).

to avoid being pushed back into sin. On the one hand, Amy's confession intends to lead Amye (and the reader) to God; on the other hand, the poet's frequent failures to find true freedom stress the need for divine guidance to reach this ineffable joy. Each of his liberations is due to an outside force: in Book I, the sun destroys the tower of love; in Book II, the old man warns him of the dangers of the theater of the world; in Book III, God saves him from the temple of science. At least Amy does not seem to repeat the same mistakes: he does not listen to the sun's warnings and keeps consolidating the breaches in his tower (Book I), but he follows the old man's advice and leaves the world immediately (Book II). Yet is Amy's quest a circular one, or does his journey follow an ascending path? The answer to this question is by no means straightforward.

Interpretation

For Robert Cottrell, Amy's journey is circular: it begins and ends in God. This conception eliminates any possibility of progression; throughout his journey, Amy remains essentially the same. Cottrell stresses the presence of recurrent notions that take on different meanings in the various sequences of the protagonist's life (*Grammar*, pp. 11–12, 251–53). In Book I, for instance, Amy's love for Amye makes him deaf and blind to anything that distracts him from his passion. After his conversion, the protagonist shows again a total indifference to the outside world, although the object of his desire is now God. The first place of confinement (the tower of love) epitomizes sensual and wordly pleasures; it is the negative image of Amy's spiritual freedom in the prison of God's love. In addition, Amy often speaks of God in geometrical terms and privileges the image of the circle as epitomizing confinement, unity, and transcendence: "sercle rond sans la circumference, / Par tous costez egal, sans difference, / Commencement ne fin ne s'y retrouve" (p. 162, vv. 795–97). A few lines further on, he similarly speaks of the "divine eternelle rondeur" (p. 163, v. 802).⁴⁷ In contrast to Cottrell's static view of Amy, Paula Sommers argues that every sequence of the protagonist's life brings him closer to the light of revelation. Sommers highlights a pattern of spiritual ascent inspired by Saint Bonaventure's tripartite division of *purgatio*, *illuminatio*, and *perfectio*.

⁴⁷ On the sources of this image in Marguerite's poem, see V. L. Saulnier, "Marguerite de Navarre aux temps de Briçonnet: Étude de la correspondance générale (1521–22)," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 40 (1978), 193–237 (pp. 204–07). For a broader perspective on the circle image, see Georges Poulet, *Les Métamorphoses du cercle* (Paris, 1961).

Throughout *Les Prisons*, love traces a movement of expansion: Amy's trajectory descends from erotic love to ambition and intellectual presumption, and then ascends to God and *caritas*.⁴⁸ One might object that Amy's journey to God actually marks a *descent* toward greater humility, which emphasizes the fallen human condition. Irina Iakounina, for her part, tries to reconcile Cottrell's and Sommers's positions by focusing on the poem's circular and linear designs. She explains this double structure in terms of a dialogue on love between Saint Augustine and Plato. *Les Prisons* follows Plato's ladder of love and begins by describing the protagonist's sensual love for a fellow being (Book I); Amy then expresses a higher form of love—the love of beauty—at the beginning of Book II. Love takes on an even higher, more intellectual meaning when Amy becomes a scholar, passionate for knowledge (Book III). Although Amy follows Plato's hierarchy of love, Iakounina contends that he listens to Saint Augustine, for whom each step of the Platonic ladder represents a sin which turns humankind away from God.⁴⁹ One might argue that, in *Les Prisons*, continuity and rupture go hand in hand. Amy's lust for the flesh, for instance (which Iakounina sees as epitomizing the first stage of the protagonist's development), is still present during the protagonist's stay at court (Book II).

These various commentaries do not cancel each other out but stress the polyphonic quality of *Les Prisons* and the effectiveness of Marguerite's rhetorical strategy. My own reading has outlined the function of interpretation. Amy speaks from the retrospective point of view of a man who has found true freedom in God and looks back at the story of his sinful life. Yet the focus of his account is not Amye, who silently listens to him, but the reader. The poem provokes our personal meditation on key notions—freedom, love, faith, hope, grace—and asks us to translate our moral values and religious principles into life choices. Amy's story invites us to humble our wisdom and our presumption for knowledge; it urges us to think critically about ourselves and to direct our gaze toward God. Instead of answering our questions, *Les Prisons* forces us to question our answers.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Paula Sommers, *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry of Spiritual Ascent* (Geneva, 1989).

⁴⁹ Irina Iakounina, "Step Upward, Step Down: The Path to Perfection in Marguerite de Navarre's *Prisons*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 71 (2009), 457–73. Iakounina does not give an accurate account of Cottrell's and Sommers's respective positions, however. In addition, she does not mention important biblical references. Saint Augustine, for instance, quotes Saint John's First Epistle (2:16) when he condemns the concupiscences associated with each step of the Platonic ladder (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life).

⁵⁰ I thank Dora Polachek for her careful reading of this essay.

CHANSONS SPIRITUELLES—SONGS FOR
A “DELIGHTFUL TRANSFORMATION”

Jan Miernowski

For my sister, Elżbieta Niemcewicz

The *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses* (1547) is the only extensive collection of Marguerite de Navarre's poetry published during her lifetime, possibly with some input on her part. It ends with a series of short poems believed to have been written toward the end of Marguerite's life, namely after 1533, and appearing under the heading *Chansons spirituelles*.¹ The word *chanson* is equivocal in 16th-century French. It can be translated as “song” as well as, roughly speaking, “poem in the form of a song.” Hence, first of all, the problem of the generic identification of the *chansons spirituelles*, especially their relationship to music. Second, *chansons spirituelles* are poems or songs of a very specific kind: they brand themselves as “spiritual.” This raises the question of the place of *chansons spirituelles* within Marguerite's spirituality, as well as, more widely, within the context of the vigorous theological debates which took place in the 1520s–40s. Third, the generic and the spiritual character of the queen of Navarre's songs should be considered against the background of her very original and complex poetics. In this respect, *chansons spirituelles* are embodiments of a poetic and religious chant² that seems to be, alongside narrative fiction, theatrical play, and allegorical poetry, one of the main modes of Marguerite's artistic and spiritual expression. The question is how this chant relates to other forms of the queen's writing, especially how it can be understood in relation to her poetic word on the one hand,

¹ See the excellent critical edition by Michèle Clément (Paris, 2001), vol. 9 of Marguerite de Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran, which will be the reference for the present essay. The *Chansons spirituelles* were previously edited by Georges Dottin (Geneva, 1971). I would like to thank my colleagues Robin Worth and Ullrich Langer for revising my manuscript and Jill Rosenshield for her expert advice on early modern prints. The research for the article was made possible in part by grants from the Center for European Studies of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and from the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.

² The meaning I ascribe to the term “chant” in relation to the poetics of the *Chansons spirituelles* will be explained below.

and, on the other, to the mystic silence for which she longs. Finally, the performative aspect of the *chansons spirituelles* calls for an approach which extends literary interpretation of these texts into the realm of the historical anthropology of religious practices. Indeed, Marguerite's poetic chant not only has a particular discursive and musical texture, it also constitutes a puzzling religious gesture. It is therefore probable that the *chansons spirituelles* are possessed of a quasi-ritual dimension.

The Song

The *Chansons spirituelles* were first published by Jean de Tournes in Lyon in the the 1547 edition of the "pearls" of Marguerite's poetry: *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses, tresillustre royne de Navarre*. On page 467, the reader finds the title *Chansons spirituelles* clearly displayed and separated from the preceding *Complainte pour un detenu prisonnier* by an ornamental printer's headpiece. Contrary to what one might expect, the two poems that follow this general heading are entitled not "Chansons" but "Pensées" and constitute the queen's poetic thoughts devoted to the illness and death of her beloved brother, François I. Both funerary meditations are nevertheless clearly meant to be sung, since the tunes that should be used for this purpose are provided in the form of incipits of other songs which must already have been familiar to the reader. The two "Pensées" are followed by a *rondeau*, also written at the time of the king's death. It is only the fourth piece of the *Chansons spirituelles* section of the book that is actually entitled "Chanson," as if the author wanted to remind the reader of the generic nature of this poem, as well as of the subsequent 28, which are all entitled "Autre chanson," followed by a final "Chanson de Noël."³

Such an insistence on labeling as *chansons* the texts that follow the initial "Pensées" and *rondeau* seems to indicate a certain anxiety on the part of the author or publisher with regard to the generic and compositional coherence of the *Chansons spirituelles* section of the book. A similar concern is visible in the Bibliothèque nationale de France manuscript

³ The same sequencing and labeling of texts is applied at the beginning of the *Chansons spirituelles* section in the next, posthumous edition of the *Marguerites*, published by Jean Ruelle (Paris, 1558). Both editions are available in the digitized Gordon Collection of the University of Virginia: <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/portfolio/gordon/completed_titles.html>.

fr. 24.298, which is the source of 15 additional *chansons*, supplementing, in modern editions, the 32 texts published in the *Marguerites de la Marguerite*.⁴ Here too the genre designation—*Chansons spirituelles*—written prominently across the page, introduces the series of poems. Curiously, two of them are additionally labeled “Chanson,” as if the scribe wanted to reinforce their generic identification.⁵ The reason for this extra titling seems to be their location in the manuscript: both follow poems which are lengthy poetic dialogues, *Dialogue de Regulus et de Lucia* and *Dialogue de Dieu et de l’Homme*. In sum, in the printed *Marguerites* and in the manuscript BnF, fr. 24.298, the scribe, the printer, or indeed the author herself mixed *chansons* with poems which seem to be something else—poetic meditations, dialogues, even a *rondeau*—but which are also close enough to the loose form of the *chanson* that he or she felt compelled to repeat the generic designation of the *chanson* which immediately follows such “interlopers.”

We are therefore faced with two tendencies which, at first sight, seem to go in opposite directions. First, we see an apparent tolerance for associating different poetic genres under the general heading *Chansons spirituelles*. Such heterogeneity has caused some hesitation on the part of the modern editors of Marguerite’s spiritual songs, Georges Dottin and Michèle Clément. Both keep the two initial “Pensées” as part of their *corpora*, while numbering continuously all 47 *chansons* from the *Marguerites* and from BnF, fr. 24.298. However, Michèle Clément also includes in her critical edition the *rondeau* and the dialogue between God and Man, while eliminating the dialogue between Regulus and Lucia, on the grounds that it does not fit the religious character of the *Chansons spirituelles*. Associated with the apparent generic heterogeneity of the *corpus* is a second tendency, however: namely the insistence with which some strategically located texts are labeled “Chansons.” This pertains to poems which follow texts that have other generic characteristics, thus potentially blurring the reader’s capacity to recognize a “genuine” *chanson*. These two concurrent tendencies lead me to believe that: first, the internal coherence of the

⁴ BnF, fr. 24.298, discovered and published in 1896 by Abel Lefranc, contains late works by Marguerite de Navarre, such as the long allegorical poem *Les Prisons*. According to Michèle Clément, the manuscript dates from the late 16th century. The two initial “Pensées,” occasioned by the death of François I, as well as the first *chanson* from BnF, fr. 24.298 are also found in BnF, fr. 12.485. The total of 32 *chansons spirituelles* includes the two poems entitled “Pensées” but excludes the *rondeau* that follows them as well as a final sonnet that closes this section in the *Marguerites*.

⁵ *Chansons* 35 and 40 in the Clément edition.

Chansons spirituelles sections of the *Marguerites* and of MS fr. 24.298 do not rely primarily on the generic homogeneity of their components but on some other factor, possibly a thematic one; and second, *chanson* constitutes a distinct poetic form, although its identification is tricky, especially with regard to its complicated relationship to music.

Let's begin with the second hypothesis, postponing consideration of the first until the second part of this study.

In order to appreciate how difficult it is to define a *chanson* in 16th-century France, one can consider the attempts made by theorists of poetry during Marguerite's lifetime and shortly after her death. In his 1548 treatise, Thomas Sébillet characterized the *chanson* in relation to the ode, which he also called "chant Lyrique":

La chanson approche de tant près l'Ode, que de son et de nom se ressemblent quasi de tous points: car aussi peu de constance a l'une que l'autre en forme de vers, et usage de rime. Aussi en est la matière toute une. Car le plus commun sujet de toutes deux sont, Vénus, ses enfants, et ses Charités: Bacchus, ses flacons, et ses saveurs. Néanmoins tu trouveras la Chanson moindre en nombre de couplets que le chant Lyrique, et de plus inconstante façon et forme de style, notamment aujourd'hui, que les Musiciens et Chantres font de tout ce qu'ils trouvent, voient, et oient, Musique et Chanson, et me doute fort qu'entre ci et peu de jours ils feront de Petit-pont, et de la Porte-Baudets des chansons nouvelles.⁶

The *chanson* is very much like the ode; it is characterized by the same looseness of prosody and an identical thematic interest in love and wine, but it is shorter and even more variable in form.⁷ Understandably, one might be disappointed by Sébillet's lack of precision, especially when we take into account that the ode, of which the *chanson* is a more amorphous byproduct, is itself a downgraded version of the *cantique*. Both the *cantique* and the ode are variable in form, such lack of consistency being especially felt in the case of the latter, since it is appreciated by lovers who are as quick to change their mood and their outfits as is the ode to alter its sound, rhyme, and metric structure. In chapter six of Sébillet's treatise, the *chanson* thus comes after the *cantique* and the ode as the third, that is, the loosest and the shortest form, and it would have dissolved into a

⁶ *Art poétique français*, in *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*, ed. Francis Goyet (Paris, 1990), p. 127.

⁷ Du Bellay's laborious distinction between the ode and "vers Lyriques" on the one hand, and "Chansons vulgaires" on the other, is based not on prosodic but on stylistic criteria. See *La Défense et illustration de la langue françoise*, ed. Jean-Charles Monferran (Geneva, 2001), p. 134.

kind of generic limbo if the theorist had not saved it *in extremis* from insignificance by propelling it to the role of a general term encompassing the other two:

Et ne t'ébahis au reste de ce que j'ai séparé ces trois, le Cantique, l'Ode, et la chanson, que je pouvais comprendre sous l'appellation de Chanson: Car encore que nous appelions bien en Français, Chanson, tout ce qui se peut chanter: et ces trois soient indifféremment faits pour chanter, comme leurs noms et leurs usages portent, toutefois connais-tu bien qu'ils ont en forme et style quelque dissimilitude, laquelle tue t'eût fait douter, et comme je l'ai exprimée, ne te peut que soulager.⁸

Despite Sébillet's final assurances to the contrary, his reader cannot feel much "relieved" by this very cursory sketching out of the differences between the *cantique*, the ode, and the *chanson*. Nor does the last term gain any precision when it is blown up to encompass all poetry that is destined to be sung.⁹

As disappointing as it might be on a theoretical level, such conceptual expansion of the *chanson* corresponds, according to Sébillet, to the cultural practice of his time. Indeed, as he notes, musicians and singers use anything they can find in their frenzy to produce *chansons nouvelles*. This is a marketing phrase found in the title of numerous 16th-century collections of songs. It advertises lyrics—often recycled from previous editions but sometimes also released before the literary debut of the text—published either to supplement an existing melody or, inversely, written in anticipation of a tune to be composed. "Which should come first, poetry or music?" is a much-debated question among French Renaissance theorists of poetry. In his critique of Du Bellay's *Deffense et illustration de la langue françoise*, Barthélemy Aneau sharply rejects the notion that poets should follow the lead of musicians in composing their verses. Peletier du Mans is less categorical in his *Art poétique* of 1555. He admits that in composing his poems, he has increasingly taken into account the needs of their possible setting to music.¹⁰ As has been stressed by Edwin Duval, it was common practice among the poets of the generation of Clément Marot to compose their poetry in anticipation of its future

⁸ *Art poétique français*, pp. 127–28.

⁹ On Sébillet's strategy in grouping literary genres, see Jean-Charles Monferran, *L'École des Muses. Les arts poétiques français à la Renaissance (1548–1610): Sébillet, Du Bellay, Peletier et les autres* (Geneva, 2011), pp. 136–46.

¹⁰ *Art poétique français*, pp. 211 and 297.

musical adaptation.¹¹ In fact, poetry could easily either precede or follow the melody with which it was ultimately associated, as is illustrated by the example of the first collection of psalms translated into French by Marot and additional poetic versions by Calvin.¹²

Behind these discussions lies, of course, the larger question of the relationship between music and poetry in the French Renaissance.¹³ From this point of view, Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles* appear at a very interesting moment in literary history. We are no longer in the years of the *Seconde Rhétorique*, when—according to the famous distinction made by Eustache Deschamps—poetry was considered to be a “natural music,” made of rhythmic speech (“paroules metrifées”), molded into verses of *rondeaux*, *ballades*, and *lais*, distinct from but also complementary to the “artificial music” of instruments. Nor are we yet at the time of the *Pléiade*, with its grandiose dreams of orphic chant, which would unite the words of the poet with the sounds of his lyre in a harmonious ascent to the neo-Platonic One.¹⁴ With Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles*, we are between these two moments of literary evolution, in the time of “popular songs” (“chansons vulgaires”), so much disdained by Du Bellay. The superstars of this period were Clément Marot and, to a lesser extent, Mellin de Saint-Gelais. The latter was at one and the same time a poet, a composer, and a performer; it is the former, however, who dominated the publishing market of *chansons nouvelles*, either with his original lyrics or through his influence on recognized and anonymous imitators. According to Annie Cœurdevey, 151 poems by Marot were adapted to music by 90 known composers and published in numerous collections between 1528 and 1597.¹⁵ These statistics pertain solely to Marot's non-religious texts, and his psalms enjoyed an immense popularity on their own. Indeed, in

¹¹ Edwin M. Duval, “From the ‘chanson parisienne’ to Scève's French Canzoniere: Lyric Form and Logical Structure of the Dizain,” in *A Scève Celebration: Délie 1544–1994*, ed. Jerry C. Nash (Saratoga, 1994), pp. 71–85 (p. 76).

¹² See the analyses by Pierre Pidoux, reported by Jean-Daniel Candaux, “Les Pseumes de Marot chez les Huguenots: La musique,” in *Clément Marot, “Prince des poètes français”, 1496–1996: Actes du Colloque international de Cahors-en-Quercy, 1996*, ed. Gérard Defaux and Michel Simonin (Paris, 1997), pp. 477–81 (p. 478).

¹³ See the excellent synthesis on this topic by Jean Vignes in *Poétiques de la Renaissance: Le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur héritage en France au XVI^e siècle*, ed. Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Fernand Hallyn (Geneva, 2001), pp. 638–58. See also pp. 29–47 by François Cornilliat.

¹⁴ See François Rouget, *L'Apothéose d'Orphée: L'esthétique de l'ode en France au XVI^e siècle de Sébillet à Scaliger (1548–1561)* (Geneva, 1994).

¹⁵ Annie Cœurdevey, *Bibliographie des œuvres poétiques de Clément Marot mises en musique dans les recueils profanes du XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1997).

the later 1530s and throughout the 1540s, humming the psalms set to different popular tunes became very fashionable at the French court. Marot himself acknowledges this fact in an epistle addressed to Marguerite de Navarre from exile in Ferrara in 1536. In this nostalgic vision, the poet dreams that he is back at the French court, close to his beloved queen, singing her the psalms which for her are "chansons," that is, familiar songs accompanying her daily life.¹⁶

Most importantly, according to musicologists, the close cooperation of Marot with composers and performers fostered a musical language which largely abandoned the complexities of the previous era in favor of melodies based on regular rhythms, often associated with popular dances.¹⁷ These are the years when printers such as Pierre Attaignant popularized homophonic, strophic songs, often associated with the so-called *chanson parisienne*, and which would evolve in the second half of the century into syllabic *airs de cour*.¹⁸ Such formal moderation of the musical accompaniment and the increased care for the intelligibility of the poetic text must have played well with Marot's poetics of artful ease and simplicity. It must also have been appreciated by Marguerite de Navarre, both on ideological and on artistic grounds. Indeed, the queen's spirituality and her poetics favored the mind and the voice of simple people, those *idiotae* who are poor in spirit and therefore closer to God than the wise men of this world.

It is therefore quite understandable that the shadow of Marot should preside over the section of *Chansons spirituelles* in the *Marguerites* of 1547. Indeed, one may wonder if by placing the *Chansons spirituelles* at the very end of her book, the queen was not following the example of Marot's *Adolescence clémentine* of 1532, which also ends with a subdivision of

¹⁶ *Epistre XVII*, vv. 119–20, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux, 2 vols. (Paris, 1990–93), 2:120, referred to by Olivier Millet, "Marot et Calvin: Chanter les psaumes," in *Clément Marot, "Prince des poètes français,"* pp. 463–76 (p. 464).

¹⁷ Frank Dobbins, "Les premières mises en musique des chansons, des épigrammes et des rondeaux de Marot," in *Clément Marot, "Prince des poètes français,"* pp. 483–502 (p. 498). See also Georgie Durosoir, "Les genres de la musique vocale," in *La notion du genre à la Renaissance*, ed. Guy Demerson (Geneva, 1984), pp. 249–52.

¹⁸ See Georges Dottin, *La chanson française à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1991), pp. 13–22; *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London, 1980), 4:135–45; G. Thibault, "Musique et poésie au XVI^e siècle avant les 'Amours' de Ronsard," in *Musique et poésie au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1954), p. 82; Kenneth Jay Levy, "Vaudeville, vers mesurés et airs de cour," *ibid.*, pp. 186–99; Laurence F. Bernstein, "The 'Parisian Chanson': Problems of Style and Terminology," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 31 (1978), 193–240; and Georgie Durosoir, *L'air de cour en France, 1571–1655* (Liège, 1991).

chansons.¹⁹ Moreover, in Marguerite's collection of poetry, *Chansons spirituelles* are immediately preceded by a *Complainte pour un detenu prisonnier*, a long poetic lamentation whose lyric subject is an imprisoned Evangelical, who begs God, Fortune, and his human protectors for mercy. A critical tradition dating back to Abel Lefranc and passed on through Pierre Jourda identifies this fictional figure with Marot. Michèle Clément also places much emphasis on this association in her recent critical edition. According to Clément, Marguerite introduces the *Chansons spirituelles* with a poetic complaint voiced by a fictional Marot, whom she imagines calling out for help, most probably amidst the tribulations at the court of Ferrara in 1536. The queen deliberately gives voice to the prisoner's complaint in order to present her subsequent *chansons* as testimonies to her deep sense of failure in ensuring the reign of the gospel in the world and as a symptom of her will to adopt a more intimate, less militant tone.²⁰

Whatever may have been the level of the queen's engagement in the ideological action of the "Navarrian network" (to adopt Jonathan Reid's term) in the late 1530s and in the 1540s—that is, during what we assume to be the time of the composition of most of the *chansons spirituelles*—it is obvious that Marguerite refers the reader to Marot's poetics at the very outset of her song collection. Indeed, according to her explicit indication, the second poem of the series should be sung to the tune of "Jouyssance vous donneray," that is the fourth piece in the *Chansons* section of Marot's *Adolescence clémentine*. This song was immensely popular and set to music by no less than seven different composers, including Claudin de Sermisy, whose version was published by Attaignant around 1528.²¹

One might be surprised by Marguerite's choice of "Jouyssance vous donneray," a melody associated with vibrantly erotic lyrics, as the musical accompaniment for a text that is her second poetic meditation devoted to the death of her royal brother. The reason for this decision is not only her ardent love for François I, a passion she expressed in some of her letters in a style close to what one might expect from an affectionate spouse.

¹⁹ Symptomatically, both the *Marguerites* and the *Adolescence* would be followed by their respective *Suites*.

²⁰ See Michèle Clément, ed. cit., pp. 21–24. For a different view, see Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, 2009), 2:568–69.

²¹ See *Chansons spirituelles*, ed. Dottin, p. 171, and Annie Cœurdevey, *Bibliographie*, pp. 10–12.

Such association of a love song with a funeral lament has a profound spiritual meaning, on which I will comment shortly. It may also be explained, however, by an editorial practice pervasive in the market of French *chansons*: the free circulation of melodies and lyrics. To put it simply, from the second and third decades of the 16th century onward, that is, from what Georges Dottin calls “le grand départ de la chanson française,” anything could be put to music and any music could be used to sing any fragment of poetry. Writing in 1539, Gratien du Pont sums up the first aspect of this phenomenon:

Car stille de Chanson est plus subiect au chant que chant au stille. Et combien que l'on face chant sur mainctz Rondeaux, Ballades, Vers epars et aultres dictes tailles. C'est au plaisir des Musiciens qui composent lesdits chantz. . . . Dont tous les dessusdictz stilles sont à la subiection du chant, non des regles de Rhetorique.²²

In other words, while in the late 15th century, the *chanson* was still a rather fixed prosodic genre, subject to the metric rules of a *virelai* or a *rondeau*, by the time of Marguerite de Navarre any suitable poem, or indeed fragment thereof, could be made into a song. Such an expectation is widely inscribed in the numerous anthologies of *chansons* published in Renaissance France, and it manifests itself in eight out of 47 of Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles*, in the form of the recommendation of a tune that can be used to sing the poetic text (“Sur le chant de . . .,” “Sus . . .,” “Autre, sur le chant . . .”).²³ These recommendations are usually to be understood only as open-ended suggestions, as is shown in a 1579 anthology where a “Chanson nouvelle d'une jeune fille se complaignante de son amy, qui l'a laissée” is explicitly marked as adaptable to any melody: “Et se chante à plaisir.” Indeed, *chansons* were free-market commodities, ready to be sold on the streets, as advertised in these lyrics, clearly destined to be a “voix-de-ville,” that is, a homophonic song reproducing commercial “cris”:

²² Gratien du Pont is thus expanding on Pierre Fabri's conceptual distinctions. Fabri acknowledges that one can sing a *ballade* or a *rondeau*, but this does not mean that *ballades* and *rondeaux* can be called “chansons.” Gratien du Pont refuses to ascribe the category “chanson” to any specific rhetorical form, the only formal feature being a certain amount of repetitions of words or lines. See *Art et science de rhétorique métrifiée*, reprint of the 1539 edition (Geneva, 1972), fols. 38v–39r, quoted in *Chansons françaises de la Renaissance*, ed. Georges Dottin (Paris, 1991), p. 12; Pierre Fabri, *Grant et vray art de pleine rhétorique*, reprint of the 1521 edition (Geneva, 1972), Book 2, fol. 34v.

²³ *Chansons* 1, 2, 7, 17, 19, 32, 34, 41.

Argent cassé, vieille monnoye,
 L'emouleur gaigne petit,
 Croye de Champagne croye,
 Oublie, oublie, où est-il?
 À deux liards les chansons tant belles,
 Douces meures, fruit nouveau,
 À mes beaux cerneaux, noix nouvelles,
 Capandu, poires de certeau.²⁴

Lyrics are waiting to be sung, soliciting the attention of musicians, who are eager to respond to such calls, as did Claudin de Sermisy by composing music to many of Marot's *chansons*.

Did Marguerite de Navarre expect an equally enthusiastic response to her *chansons spirituelles* on the part of musicians and the public? Did she see her *chansons* primarily as songs to be sung collectively, melodies to be hummed to oneself, poems to be read aloud in a circle of courtly ladies and gentlemen, or rather did she intend them to be read quietly in the private context of individual meditation? It is probably fair to suppose all the above. From the tunes indicated for some of the *chansons* one may clearly infer that the queen foresaw the musical performance of her texts. Most of the songs are built on repetitive structures which lend themselves to rhythmical and melodic arrangements. In many cases, the incipit or a portion of it is systematically repeated throughout the text.²⁵ Elsewhere the queen puts forth the entire first strophe as a repetitive pattern.²⁶ Moreover, while writing many of her poems she must have been humming well-known songs, which, in turn, she may reasonably have expected her readers to recognize, anticipating them singing along, even without the need for explicitly indicating the tunes in the printed or manuscript collections. This is how Georges Dottin was able to identify 16 more songs, mostly from the 15th century, which Marguerite de Navarre tried to emulate.²⁷ Such echoing of popular tunes by the queen

²⁴ "Chanson nouvelle de tous les cris de Paris, sur le chant de la nouvelle volte de Provence," in *Sommaire de tous les recueils des Chansons Tant Amoureuses, Rustiques que Musicales: Avec plusieurs Chansons nouvelles, non encore mises en lumière* (Lyon, 1579), fols. 63r–64v.

²⁵ *Chansons* 8, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 28, 37. Gratien du Pont insists on the role of repetitions in a *chanson*: "en chansons fault redire souvent ung mot, ou toute la ligne consequivement" (*Art et science de rhétorique métrifiée*, fol. 39r).

²⁶ *Chansons* 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 36, 38.

²⁷ *Chansons* 3, 5, 6, 11, 16, 20, 24, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 44, 45. See appendices in Dottin's and Clément's editions. It would be fascinating, although risky, to hypothesize as to which of the musical genres of *chansons* fashionable in the 1530s and 1540s, defined by Dottin—the "chanson galante de cour," the "chanson rustique," or the "chanson

consists mostly of the borrowing of incipits or refrains, often modified for the occasion but still easily recognizable. Even the long poetic dialogues interjected amidst Marguerite's *chansons* may have been conceived of as material for potential songs. First, it was a widespread practice in the 16th century to compose *chansons* by picking up only some of the lines of longer poems. Second, the *Dialogue de Regulus et de Lucia* and the *Dialogue de Dieu et de l'Homme* have, respectively, 70 and 56 lines, which is far from being the record among the texts contained in the *Chansons spirituelles* section. *Chanson* 34, for instance, to be sung to the tune "Avez point veuz la Peronnelle," and which immediately precedes the first of the dialogues, counts 164 lines. Finally, the dialogic structure is not found exclusively in poems labeled "Dialogues." Other songs have a highly elaborate dialogic structure as well, such as *chanson* 23, where each strophe starts with a question addressed to a wandering soul, followed by the soul's answer, and ending with a longer doctrinal explanation:

Ame, où vas tu sy soudain?
 Je cours à plaisir mondain.
 C'est en vain;
 Car plaisir mondain est faux,
 Tu te fourvoye,
 Qui en tristesse et tous maux
 Fine sa joye.

At the same time, the musical dimension of the *Chansons spirituelles* does not preclude the possibility that Marguerite de Navarre destined them—either poem by poem or as a whole section of the *Marguerites*—for collective or solitary reading. Using the fashionable form of the *chanson*, she may have gambled not only on the musical success of her lyrics, similar to that enjoyed by Marot's songs, but also on a more literary reception and some kind of collegial readership, like the one she imagined for the novellas of the *Heptaméron*.

Of course, there is one important difference between Marguerite's *chansons nouvelles* and her *nouvelles nouvelles* (as novellas were often called in Renaissance France). In contrast to the queen's *Chansons spirituelles*, the *Heptaméron* did not receive any definite title during her lifetime.²⁸ The religious allegories of the narratives have therefore to be inferred

narrative"—Marguerite had in mind when writing those poems which do not refer either explicitly or implicitly to identifiable tunes.

²⁸ The first printed edition of the *Heptaméron* is posthumous and the dates of the extant manuscripts are uncertain.

through a process of fascinating yet laborious interpretation, while the spiritual character of the songs is explicitly advertised from the start. To understand in what sense *chansons spirituelles* are indeed “spiritual,” one must first remember that the free-market circulation of lyrics and melodies involved both lay and religious works, and easily bridged thematic divides. For instance, love songs, which obviously outnumbered any other *chansons*, could provide melodies for religious lyrics as well as for political songs.²⁹ Indeed, before being recommended as an accompaniment in Marguerite’s *Chansons spirituelles*, Marot’s “Jouyssance vous donneray” served as the melodic line for the French translation of psalm 43, as well as for three other religious songs, one anti-Protestant and two pro-Reformation pieces.³⁰

At this point, then, we must consider the question of the *contrafactum*, a notion often associated with Marguerite’s *Chansons spirituelles*. A *contrafactum* is created when lay and religious songs trade their respective lyrics or melodies.³¹ The genre traces its origins back to the Middle Ages, for instance to the 13th century’s religious adaptations of erotic poetry by Gautier de Coinci. As has been demonstrated by Dottin, the range of such exchange is extensive: the religious remake can borrow the entire profane text, only altering certain key words, such as replacing “ma Dame” with “mon âme”; it can reuse merely the rhymes of the original lyrics, or even limit its borrowing to the metric structure; it can also echo a thematic scenario, as is the case in *chanson* 34, where the soul fleeing the tribulations of the world emulates—on the spiritual level—the adventures of Peronnelle, a young girl who leaves her parents’ home in order to follow a group of passing soldiers.

Marguerite was certainly aware of numerous Protestant *contrafacta*, such as the 1546 *Chrestienne Resiouyssance* by Eustorg de Beaulieu, who wrote his pious propaganda in accordance with the latest fashionable tunes. It is nevertheless incorrect to say that Marguerite’s *Chansons spirituelles* are, generally speaking, simply a collection of *contrafacta*. First,

²⁹ For example, a “Chanson nouvelle faite sur l’establisement du connetable de France et se chante sur le chant Adieu Mamy,” in *S’ensuyt plusieurs belles chansons nouvelles* (Paris, 1542).

³⁰ For the bibliography on the extensive recycling of this song (including two other occurrences in Marguerite’s plays), see Howard Mayer Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater, 1400–1550* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 244–46.

³¹ For a systematic review of this question, see Dottin, ed. cit., pp. X–XVII.

some of her songs were written without any preexisting tune in mind.³² Second, as suggested earlier, some of these texts may not have been primarily destined for musical performance, but rather conceived of as devotional poetry which might ultimately—or not—be turned into songs. What is even more important, however, is Marguerite's unique conception of spirituality, which sets her poems far apart from Protestant and Counter-Reformation *contrafacta*, and indeed from other *Chansons spirituelles* published during her time.

The Spirit

How does Marguerite understand the concept of “spirit”? What does it mean for her that her *chansons* are “spiritual”? Despite her profound religious preoccupations, Marguerite de Navarre was a queen and a poet, not a theologian. She did not write any theological treatise, nor leave a devotional journal reflecting her religious and philosophical ideas. The closest we can get to knowing what she thought, therefore, is to analyze her works as well as the writings that she may have directly or indirectly known and to consider them as mirrors of her religious beliefs.³³ A particular role in such a venture is played by the letters-treatises written between 1521 and 1524 by the bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Briçonnet, Marguerite's mentor and protégé.³⁴

As is often the case in this epistolary exchange, in her brief letter of 17 November 1521, Marguerite launches Briçonnet on a new path of theological reflection. This she does by submitting to him a metaphor for his consideration: God is a heavenly organist blowing the wind of his spirit into human pipes, large and small. In his lengthy response, the bishop develops this metaphorical image into a treatise on the nature of human

³² Dottin gives the example of *chanson* 35, which was set to music after the queen's death by two different composers: De Bussi *vel* De Bussy in 1554 and Roland de Lassus in 1567 (ed. cit., p. 164).

³³ This is the method adopted in the fundamental book by Gary Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre's Devotional Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1992).

³⁴ Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79). As noted by Viviane Mellinghoff-Bourgerie, Briçonnet's letters should not be considered as the simple reflection of an intimate relationship between a spiritual director and his penitent; see “Échange épistolaire entre Marguerite d'Angoulême et Guillaume Briçonnet: discours mystiques ou direction spirituelle?,” in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992: Actes du Colloque international de Pau, 1992*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan, 1995), pp. 135–57.

beings and their relation to God and to each other (*Correspondance*, 1:65–70). Briçonnet states that spiritual harmony is contrary to its worldly counterpart. In the latter case, in order to play in tune all the pipes must receive as much air as is required by their individual size: the small ones little air, the big ones proportionally more. Spiritual harmony, by contrast, relies only on the small pipes—“L’esperit divin ne remplit que les petitz vaisseaulx, esquelz mieulx se garde sans eventer la doulce et bonne odeur que ès grans”—while the big ones are broken by earthly pleasures and affections. Moreover, unlike the material organ, the spiritual instrument is stronger when its small human pipes are weaker. This is so because the flesh and the spirit are communicating vessels, bound by an inversely proportional relationship: the stronger one is, the weaker is the other. In order to fortify our spirit, we should therefore diminish our flesh.

Despite differences in fortitude between the particular pipes composing the spiritual organ, Briçonnet is quick to stress that the Divine Organist sends wind to all of them—that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit—according to their faith. This does not mean that every pipe produces an equal sound and harmony or indeed that it plays at all. As is the case with material organs, only those pipes play that are activated by the musician, in this case God. Such a conception of divine election, however, does not condemn humans to passivity. On the contrary, people who understand this “evangelical doctrine,” people who are “spiritual” in the sense given to the term by Saint Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians 6:1, know that all that is good in Christians results from their collaboration with divine grace. Thus spiritual harmony unites believers among themselves and binds them to the goodness of God, who bestows his grace in order to perfect and bring about their actions:

tous chrestiens sont unes orgues pour perpetuelles louenges du debonnaire Seigneur et chacun d’eulx tuyaux ès dicts orgues toutz rempliz de son esperit, qui touche les cœurs de chacun ès operations vertueuses qu’ilz font. . . . Car le bien que nous faisons, qui est ung son et harmonie plaisant à Dieu, n’est aultre chose que estre remply de grace et touchéz de la bonté divine, nous prevenant en multiplicité de grace et en nous ouvrant et parfaissant toutes operations.³⁵

Thus at the outset of Marguerite’s intellectual, religious, and artistic life, Briçonnet develops the musical theme suggested by the queen into a coherent doctrine about the flesh and the spirit, the works of humans

³⁵ *Correspondance*, 1:68–69. See also 2:243.

and the grace of God. How is Marguerite able to use and expand these teachings later in her *Chansons spirituelles*?

Chanson 24 raises similar issues to those discussed by Briçonnet in his considerations on spiritual harmony. It revolves around two specific questions asked by a man to God: first, how to deal with the soul's fear of damnation, and second, who will free the soul from "the body of this death"?³⁶ The answers provided by God are very much in line with Briçonnet's teachings. The soul should find solace in a shock therapy consisting of the realization of its sinfulness and of the worthlessness of any of its deeds. After confessing that it is void of any good, it will aspire to become nothing, indeed it would prefer never to have come to be. This drive to nothingness, so characteristic of the Pseudo-Dionysian mysticism that Briçonnet, Lefèvre d'Étaples, and other members of the Meaux circle inspired in the queen, corresponds to the image of the small pipes of God's organ in the bishop's letter, "[l]esquelz sont . . . toutz foibles et qui tousjours tendent à plus se affloiblir."³⁷

The answer to the second question also has affinities with Briçonnet's thought. Salvation will come not from the senses or from reason but from the grace of God, for which the soul is predestined ("predestinée"). This heavily loaded theological term appears only once in the *Chansons spirituelles* and does not seem to have the same connotations as in Calvin's teachings.³⁸ It refers rather to the election by God of certain pipes of his organ: although all of them are powered by the wind of the spirit, only those produce a sound that the divine organist chooses to activate.

While they insist on the role to be played by the faithful, Briçonnet's and Marguerite's doctrines of divine election thus simultaneously exclude any presumptuous ambition to earn salvation through one's deeds. Referring the queen to the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the bishop of Meaux reminds her that the graces bestowed on humans by the Spirit of God should not be left unattended to burn out, but should be continuously

³⁶ As noted by Clément, ed. cit., the last expression comes directly from Rom. 7:24 ("de corpore mortis"). In this passage, Saint Paul opposes the law of the Spirit of life in Christ to the law of sin and death.

³⁷ *Correspondance*, 1:67. On the influence of Pseudo-Dionysian mysticism on Marguerite, see my *Signes dissimilaires: La quête des noms divins dans la poésie française de la Renaissance* (Geneva, 1997), pp. 33–99.

³⁸ See, however, vv. 11–20 of the *Dialogue de Dieu et de l'Homme*, which may provide insight into the problem of human regeneration. On this topic, see Carol Thysell, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 66–78. On the Evangelicals' understanding of predestination, see Reid, *King's Sister*, 2:491ff.

fed by acts of love and “œuvres flamboiantes.”³⁹ On the other hand, Briçonnet is equally eager to stress that salvation comes from our faith in the grace of God, which is a divine gift and not the result of our actions.⁴⁰ Marguerite insists as well that Christ, the fountain of salvation, gives living waters freely, without cost or labor: “Sans or, argent, ny avoir / L’eau donne en abondance, / Non par labeur, ne devoir, / Par merite, ou puissance; / Mais par pure Election” (*chanson* 14, vv. 43–47).⁴¹ This does not imply, however, that human actions are meaningless. *Chanson* 29 is a precise roadmap for those who aspire to become “Christ-like,” a spiritual goal dear to Lefèvre d’Étaples and his followers, after being highlighted by the immensely popular 15th-century devotional treatise *Imitatio Christi*:

Ses biens aux povres fault donner
 D’un cœur joyeux et volontaire,
 Et les injures pardonner,
 Et à ses ennemis bien faire;
 Laisser vengeance, ire, et envie,
 Aymer l’ennemy si l’on peult,
 Aymer celle qui n’ayme mye;
 Il ne fait pas le tour qui veult. (vv. 9–16)

The voluntarism of these lines is quite striking, but not devoid of ambiguity. While one should voluntarily (“d’un cœur volontaire”) renounce earthly possessions, the refrain of the song seems less upbeat: “Il ne fait pas le tour qui veult.” Does it mean simply that such heroic actions are not easy and that some of us will not have enough determination to accomplish them? Or might it mean that it is not enough to aspire to such moral heroism, that human will by itself is incapable of good deeds? The first meaning corresponds to the commonly admitted, idiomatic sense of the phrase “faire le tour,” which refers to the success of someone’s risky endeavor, while the second, setting “qui veult” apart, potentially puts human volition into question.

The apparent ambivalence of the refrain of *chanson* 29 clearly shows the different discursive possibilities embedded in the argumentation of a theologian on the one hand and in the song of a poet on the other.

³⁹ *Correspondance*, 1:103. See also 1:144, where Briçonnet’s theology of human deeds meets his call for the queen to become a potential leader of spiritual revival in the Church.

⁴⁰ *Correspondance*, 1:119: “Nous sommes saulvz par foy en la grace de Dieu et non de nous. Il vient du don de Dieu et non par noz œuvres.”

⁴¹ See also *chanson* 7, vv. 33–40.

However, the differences between Briçonnet's doctrine and Marguerite's spirituality should not be reduced to the diversity of discursive forms used by the two authors. In his extensive and nuanced analysis of Marguerite's beliefs, Gary Ferguson notes how in her later works—including the *Chansons spirituelles*—Marguerite is less keen to stress the role of good works: “just as she came to conceive of justification in increasingly Christocentric terms, so more and more in her later poetry she gives the impression that works are not so much a test of faith, of which they are an integral and necessary part, as the work of Christ himself in the life of the believer.”⁴² Such a Christocentric conception of human deeds could also be inferred from Briçonnet's vision of the divine organist, who blows his spirit into all kinds of pipes but touches only some of them in order to produce the spiritual harmony of good works among people. Nonetheless, it is true that one can hardly find in the *Chansons spirituelles* a call for active cooperation with God's grace as clearly articulated as in the bishop's letters. Gary Ferguson ascribes this evolution in Marguerite's opinion on justification to her exposure to Calvin's *Institutio christianae religionis*, first published in 1536. Such possible influences do not contradict however the queen's firm attachment to the Catholic Church and her ardent desire to see it spiritually reformed and revived.

In mapping out the complex confessional landscape stretching between Rome and Geneva, Thierry Wanegffelen has pointed to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as the decisive criterion of Catholic religious sensibility.⁴³ This Catholic dogma is vividly expressed in Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles*, thanks to the possibilities offered by the metaphoric language of poetry. *Chanson* 6 is a dialogue between a wise woman and a young hunter who inquires where and how can he find the quarry he pursues. The woman replies that the stag he looks for is so kind and tender that if he gives it his heart, it will teach him how to eat its body and its blood. In this metaphorical representation, the Eucharist is depicted as the hunter's “curée,” a piece of raw meat cut off from the freshly killed animal. The crudity of this image could easily be taken for a piece of Calvinist propaganda, if it were in the least satiric or ironic. Such is not the case however. On the contrary, the bloody image is a metaphor for a

⁴² Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief*, p. 169. See also pp. 10–53 and 167–78.

⁴³ Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome, ni Genève: Des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1997).

state of perfect communion between Christ and the faithful.⁴⁴ It should be stressed that more than an orthodox representation of the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Marguerite's poetic representation depicts the mystical union of God and the human being. It is indeed a very original kind of transubstantiation, by which the flesh of the believer is transformed into the agonizing body of the Lord:

En ceste delicate chair
 La vostre sera transmuée;
 O bien heureux qui peult toucher
 À ceste grand teste muée,
 À la chair courue et huée,
 Mise à mort, rostie pour nous,
 Sur la croix pendue à trois cloux! (*Chanson* 6, vv. 71–77)

Partaking in the sufferings of Christ on the cross amounts to having one's body metamorphosed into mystical venison. Moreover, this relation is reciprocal, since the stag will take the hunter at the same time as it is taken by him ("En vous pregnant, se lairra prendre," v. 64). Indeed through the rich connotations of Marguerite's metaphors, one has the impression that the faithful incorporates the body and blood of Christ, really present in the Eucharist, as much as he or she is incorporated by the Lord himself. Such is the meaning of another image of the union of the divine and the human in *chanson* 26: Christ the good shepherd, who promises to feed his lambs with his "pain, qui est blanc, non bis." This transparent allusion to the Eucharistic feast is followed by the announcement of union with the Lord after death:

Mortes je les voy escorcher,
 Pour les reünir en ma chair:
 Je les fais menu destrencher,
 Lors sont vivantes;
 Et en moy qui les ayme cher,
 Sont triomphantes. (vv. 37–42)

Mystic union with Christ takes the form of a bloodbath: the lambs are skinned, butchered, quartered, piecemealed, in order to be all the more alive and triumphant in the glory of God's overwhelming love.

⁴⁴ For other references to the Eucharist, see *chanson* 6, vv. 51–52; *chanson* 30, v. 27; *chanson* 33, v. 3.

Beneath the vivid colors of Marguerite's poetic representation, one can perceive quite distinct doctrinal lines. The queen is receptive to the teachings of Briçonnet and attuned to the questions fiercely debated around her, yet her poetic voice articulates an original spirituality, accentuating issues of special importance to her. Such is her recurrent insistence in the *Chansons spirituelles* on combining the doctrine of divine election with a clear-cut opposition between Law and Faith:

Le Fidele dedens la Loy
 Tout caché, tremblant, et peureux
 Par la lumiere de la Foy
 Voit cler; et devient amoureux
 De Dieu, qui le convoye:
 Voicy nouvelle joye.⁴⁵

The transition between Law and Faith, each placed strategically at the end of a verse, is grounded in a specific epistemology and a characteristic anthropology.

Illuminated by faith, humans come to "see"; in other words, they understand their ontological weakness and the Truth which is Christ himself. In order to achieve such illumination, one has to open his or her "spiritual eye": "Changeons tristesse en joye / Et en chant nostre dueil, / À fin que mieux on croye / Ouvrons de l'esprit l'œil" (*chanson* 32, vv. 1–4). Again here, Marguerite seems to follow the teachings of Briçonnet, who distinguishes three levels of cognition: corporal vision pertaining to the senses; the "eye of the soul," limited to intellectual understanding; and the "spiritual eye," which provides a vision "ineffable, innominable et incomprehensible en son amplitude et inaccessible, et neantmoins tant necessaire que, sans elle, l'entendement est mort, estaint et inutile."⁴⁶ Spiritual vision supersedes reason, while making intellectual apprehension possible, albeit in a paradoxically negative way, since true comprehension consists in understanding that spiritual light is incomprehensible.

This is why Marguerite's "spiritual eye" should not be mistakenly identified with a Ficinian "internal vision" (*interior visus*) or "eye of reason" (*rationis oculus*). It is rather synonymous with the "eye of faith" that figures in the *Heptaméron* and in *Les Prisons*.⁴⁷ Contrary to the rational character

⁴⁵ *Chanson*, 8, vv. 26–31. See also *chansons* 5, 9, 37, 44.

⁴⁶ *Correspondance*, 1:184, 189, and 32.

⁴⁷ Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, ed. Renja Salminen (Geneva, 1999), p. 188; *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva, 1978), Book III, vv. 2184–86. See my "L'intentionnalité

of the Ficinian concept, the “eye of faith” associates cognition with intentionality, following its patristic, and more specifically Augustinian, origins. It refers to the orientation of human will toward God, who is absolutely transcendent and not, as held by neo-Platonic thought, gradually attainable through a continuous hierarchy of beings. The “spiritual eye,” the “eye of faith,” is properly the vision of the human heart. For Saint Augustine, the faithful are literally called upon to look with their hearts (“Non videtur oculis, sed corde”), in other words to relinquish all transitory things and to orient their intention, purified and simplified in faith, toward heaven.⁴⁸

The concept of “heart” is fundamental for Marguerite’s spirituality, and indeed for the anthropology of the Evangelicals in general.⁴⁹ It is however not synonymous with the notion of “spirit,” but rather subordinated to it within a hierarchy of ontological levels of the human being, a hierarchy which is dynamically oriented upward in a never-ending movement of transcendence. Such hierarchy determines the compositional structure of *chanson* 41. Marguerite starts with the paradox familiar from Briçonnet’s meditations on spiritual harmony: considered from the point of view of human judgment, her body, her heart, and her spirit are weak, but this fragility is in fact a consolation, full of the promise of heavenly rewards:

Mon esprit, mon cueur et mon corps,
Selon ton haultain jugement,
Sont si débiles et si mortz
Qu’ilz n’ont aucun soustenement;
Mais leur foiblesse,
En leur tristesse,
Purgatoire et pugnition,
M’est seure consolation. (vv. 1–8)

In the subsequent three stanzas, the queen applies this principle to each of the parts of her being. Her body crumbles under the weight of sorrow; her heart is annihilated by a sense of loss; her spirit, which is yet founded on human reason, causes her the most suffering: the entire hierarchy of

dans l’*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 63 (2001), 201–25 (pp. 206–11).

⁴⁸ In *psalmum XXXIII enarratio. Sermo II, Habitus die Dominico*, 15, in *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–91), 37:1641.

⁴⁹ See John D. Lyons, “The ‘Cueur’ in the *Heptaméron*: The Ideology of Concealment,” in *Les Visages et les voix de Marguerite de Navarre: Actes du Colloque international sur Marguerite de Navarre* (Duke University), 10–11 avril 1992, ed. Marcel Tetel (Paris, 1995), pp. 107–23, as well as the studies by Gérard Defaux on the rhetoric of *pectus*, such as “Montaigne et la rhétorique de l’indicible: l’exemple ‘De la tristesse,’” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 55 (1993), 5–24.

her human faculties disintegrates in order to give way to the overwhelming power of God.

Brignonnet had proposed a similar radical anthropology in responding to Marguerite's self-accusation of being too much attached to earthly concerns (*Correspondance*, 1:223–28). The bishop distinguishes between different categories of people who are “too corporeal” (“trop en corps”). First come those who, like a mole, remain completely blinded by their pursuit of carnal pleasures. A variant of this attitude consists in placing one's salvation in material gestures and other superstitious ceremonies. Second, there are the owls, which dwell in obscurity and avoid the light: they aspire to know the world, but have no interest in its Creator. Such excessive interest in knowledge is also to be rejected. A true Christian should be irrational and surrender reason for the sake of the spirit. Thus a three-stage hierarchy is established: the flesh should be obedient to the rational soul, which in turn should give way to the spirit. As we can see, Brignonnet's letter goes further than Marguerite's *chanson* 41. The queen distinguishes the heart and the “spirit grounded in reason,” but these two volitional and rational aspects are encompassed by the bishop into the one notion of the soul. Moreover, to the levels described in Marguerite's *chanson*, Brignonnet adds another: that of the divine spirit that fills the human being. Interestingly, even at that highest level one risks becoming “trop en corps.” Such are people who misuse the grace bestowed upon them and either want to understand what cannot be understood or despise all life, even when drunk with God's love.

According to Brignonnet, Marguerite is not free from any of these errors: “Et tous trois sont trop en corps, desquelz estes vous, Madame, qui vous dictes trop en corps” (*Correspondance*, 1:228). This criticism is nevertheless tempered by a final wish that the queen, truly dead in her flesh, be alive in Jesus. This is the bishop's concluding reference to the dialectic of death and life, which he evoked at the outset of his letter:

Par vie mourant, morte est mort vivant et engendrant enfans de mort, qui sont en la mort de vie viviffiez et adoptez enfans d'esperit, pour en vivant mortifier les œuvres du corps mortiferes et venefiques qu'il exerce en sa tyrannise et domination dont est privé par vie d'esperit regnant, qui ne peult que œuvres spirituellement engendrer. Enfans qui cheminent par esperit et longitude de foy dilatée par latitude de charité, dressée et eslevée par haulteur et sublimité d'esperance, telz sont hors de corps terrestre et charnel.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *Correspondance*, 1:223. See also 2:179, 207.

The children of death become children of the spirit through the death of corporeal life and indeed through the death of death itself, thanks to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The poisonous and deadly works of the flesh are mortified; the body dies making room for the triumphant spirit, which can perform its works only spiritually. The children of the spirit are thus free of the flesh and able to move through a tri-dimensional spiritual space determined by the three theological virtues of faith, charity, and hope.

Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles* display a similar exaltation of death, ardently desired, and paradoxically turned into spiritual life through the death of Christ on the cross. Such is the case in this apostrophe to Christ, which ends *chanson* 42:

Faictz reformation
De ta formation,
Tue d'Adam vivant
L'ame qui n'est que vent;

L'ame vivant en moy
Me met en tel esmoy
Que je ne te puis veoir,
Ny croire, ne sçavoir.

Mectz à mort l'animal
Cause de tout mon mal;
Toy seul le peulx tuer,
J'ay beau m'esvertuer.

Plante en son lieu, Seigneur,
Ton esprit enseigneur
Qui est vivifiant,
Voire et deyfiant. (vv. 141–56)

The human soul is nothing but emptiness and should be killed by God. Alongside the body, it is part of the human animal that has to give way to the spirit of God, which will bring the human being to life and even deify him or her. Briçonnet insists that such deification is not only an annihilation of the body, but the absorption of the rational spirit of humanity into the divine spirit of God:

Sy raison regne en l'homme, il est necessaire que la sensualité meure; sy l'esprit domine, raison doibt caller la voylle. Quant la divinité regnera et que Dieu sera tout en tout ("Erit Deus omnia in omnibus"), lors l'esprit sera absorbé en la divinité et ne vivra plus, ains regnera. La divinité, deiffiant

l'esperit et le conformant à elle, luy donnera vie incomprehensible et transcendante l'intelligence de tout esperit.⁵¹

This sublime state of transcendent being cannot even be called "spiritual life"; it is properly a "divine life" and will be reached only if we free ourselves from our corporeal prison.

The ascent toward transcendence is therefore a kind of death drive. Such spiritual attraction to death must have played a particular role in Marguerite's evangelical entourage. Symptomatic in this respect is the *Traicté du Souverain Bien*, printed sometime before 1527 by Simon Du Bois, the queen's protégé and a key publisher in the "Navarrian network." The book is dedicated to Marguerite, who is depicted as the bride of the Song of Solomon, sustained by her groom with different gifts and in particular with a "spiritual vision" that allows her to judge the true value of things. And indeed, the central question of the book is to know the nature of the supreme good. Different answers are successively discussed and rejected: the supreme good is not the divine graces, since we need to multiply them; nor is it the knowledge of the Scriptures, because what is more important is to have faith in these and to be able to prove it by one's deeds; even charity cannot be considered the supreme good, since it grows each day and the supreme good is, by definition, timeless and cannot increase since it eternally is. The final answer to the quest of the bride may seem surprising: the supreme good is death, which, far from being a privation of life, constitutes the beginning of true life and the eternal fruition of all that is good. Having come to this conclusion, the ecstatic bride is annihilated and absorbed into her divine groom.

Without question, death is at the heart of the spirituality of the *Chansons spirituelles*. I would suggest that it is also the unifying thematic principle which underlies the literary project of the queen's *chansons*, that is, the pieces assembled both in the *Marguerites* and in BnF, fr. 24.298 under the title *Chansons spirituelles*, including the initial "Pensées," the *rondeau*, and the two dialogues of the manuscript series. Of course, presiding over the whole collection is the death of François I, which serves as the gateway to the *Chansons spirituelles* in the form of the two funeral meditations followed by the *rondeau* on the same topic. The mourning of François I is also heavily present in the MS fr. 24.298 songs. The progression

⁵¹ *Correspondance*, 1173, with the reference to 1 Cor. 15:28, much appreciated by Marguerite.

body—heart—rational soul, that we identified in *chanson* 41, culminates in the painful memory of that loss. Reason fails precisely because it brings to Marguerite memories of the one she will see no more. The next stanza recapitulates the pitiful situation where the death of Marguerite's royal brother results in the disintegration of her own self. Yet such cataclysmic defeat turns in fact into a spiritual triumph: the more her body, her heart, and her rational spirit are diminished, the stronger she feels the power of the One who has reduced her to nothing:

Dont c'est tout cueur, corps et esprit,
 Ont perdu leur force et le sens:
 Mais plus leur pouvoir est prescript
 Plus cestui là de dieu je sens,
 Qui a la gloire
 De la victoire
 De m'avoir mise toute à riens,
 Rompant mes terrestres liens. (vv. 33–40)

Death, therefore, is not an irreparable loss, but rather the supreme good. Yes, the *Chansons spirituelles* are a testimony to the queen's mourning of her brother, which is synonymous with the end of her own life. Yet this collection of spiritual songs should not be understood as a poetic tomb, a monument to the memory of the king of France. Paradoxically, François I's death is the blessed godly intervention, a divine grace, which touches the "weak pipe" of the royal sister in order to produce the beautiful sound of spiritual harmony. This death is as essential to the spiritual and literary project of the *Chansons spirituelles*, as are fundamental for *Les Prisons* the exemplary agonies which crown this lengthy and complex allegorical poem, and which involve Marguerite's mother-in-law Marguerite de Lorraine, her husband Charles d'Alençon, her mother Louise de Savoie, and again her brother François. In both cases, the deaths of Marguerite's relatives are not circumstantial additions to the artistic and ideological project of these poems; rather they constitute the capstone of their compositional structure and the climax of their spiritual evolution.

With François I dead, Marguerite lives no more. Yet such a brutal rupture with earthly concerns is in fact rapture into the heavenly realm; such annihilation of the self "trop en corps" (as Marguerite deplored her state in the correspondence with Briçonnet) is a fusion with the divine "All in all."⁵² Briçonnet affirms it repeatedly in his letters, following the

⁵² This expression, much favored by Briçonnet and borrowed from 1 Cor. 15:28, appears also in *Chansons spirituelles*, no 13, vv. 34 and 37, and no 17, v. 28.

teachings and borrowing the vocabulary of Charles de Bovelles and Nicholas of Cusa: annihilation (*aneantissemen*) goes hand in hand with mystical ascent (*assurrection*).⁵³ From this ontological roller coaster, Marguerite de Navarre takes up the paradoxical dialectics of Nothingness and All:

Vous estes donc la Vie d'un chacun,
Mais sans vous morts et moins que pouldre et cendre,
Et vous en nous par grace voulez rendre
Ce qui n'est Rien estre fait Tout en un.

Et nous faisant cognoistre nostre Rien
Et vostre Tout par grace et par puissance,
Nous renonçant avons la jouyssance
De vous, Seigneur, [le] seul bon et seul bien.⁵⁴

Time and again, Marguerite's *chansons* tell the story of the transformation, "reformation," of what God has created, the conversion of human Nothingness into the Divine All. *Chanson* 1 asks God to "transform" her sorrow into joy (v. 135); *chanson* 2 deplors that her body and her spirit are "converted" into a plaint (vv. 43–45); the *rondeau* states that the death of the brother has "changed" his sister's fear into a great desire to die (vv. 6–7); *chanson* 3 implores the grace of life in God for the soul whose heart is abandoned and who has experienced death; *chanson* 6 praises the hunter for allowing his body to be "transmuted" into the body of the Christ-stag he hunts; in *chanson* 7 the crucified Pelican promises to "transform" into himself any soul who will recognize its nothingness (v. 53); each strophe of *chanson* 8 is devoted to a joyful transformation—winter into spring, a dead tree into a flourishing one, a fearful nightingale into a singing one, a Christian soul imprisoned by the prescriptions of the Law into a faithful being enamored with God and confident in his or her salvation, and so on; in *chanson* 10 the prodigal son begs his heavenly Father to "remake" him into a new man "par mutation admirable," (vv. 43–48); in *chanson* 11 a soul illuminated by grace thanks God for "making" its Nothingness to be a divine All; in *chanson* 12 the soul, depicted as a young bride, rejoices that God has drawn her to himself ("tiré à soy"). The list could go on.⁵⁵ Each *chanson* presents the case of a human soul which either longs to be spiritually transformed or rejoices because it undergoes such transformation.

⁵³ For instance, *Correspondance*, 2176, 221, 223.

⁵⁴ *Chanson* 11, vv. 21–28. See also *chanson* 7, vv. 41–48; *chanson* 13, vv. 18–37; *chanson* 21, vv. 13–28; *chanson* 30, v. 41; *chanson* 41, v. 39; *Les Prisons*, III, vv. 2865ff.

⁵⁵ It could include in addition, for example, the *chanson* inserted into novella 19 of the *Heptaméron*, also focused on a spiritual transformation.

In each instance, such transformation is presented as the death of the “old” and carnal self, a death which at the same time is a joyful amorous union:

Le doux regard de ton amour
Est un bien, sur tous desirable:
Il tue l'Ame sans sejour;
Et morte, à CHRIST la fait semblable.
O mutation delectable,
Quand Rien en son Tout fait retour!
Làs, avancez donc ce bon jour.⁵⁶

A “delightful transformation” . . . Death as an ecstatically joyful act of love may be considered the central topic of Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles*. At the end of the road map of *chanson* 29, which lists the deeds that the faithful should accomplish in order to imitate Christ, there is a stanza devoted to the love and joy of dying:

De la mort fault estre vainqueur,
En la trouvant plaisante et belle,
Voire et l'aymer d'aussi bon cœur,
Que l'on fait la vie mortelle;
S'esjouyr en melancolie,
Et tourment, dont la Chair se deult,
Aymer la mort comme la vie;
Il ne fait pas le tour qui veult.

Death is beautiful; it is a glorious, happy encounter with Christ and therefore, paradoxically, it is the start of a new life. Thanks to Jesus's passion and resurrection, death is a source not of fear but of joy, of ineffable amorous pleasure.⁵⁷ It is therefore quite fitting that the second poetic meditation announcing François I's death should be sung to Marot's erotic tune “Jouyssance vous donneray.” Marguerite's decision does not stem from any incestuous cravings, nor is it yet another instance of the arbitrary circulation of lyrics and melodies on the free market of French *chansons nouvelles*. Rather, her brother's death, as terribly painful as it is for the worldly flesh, is paradoxically a blessing, a decisive step on the road

⁵⁶ *Chanson* 30, vv. 36–42. Line 40 provides the conclusion for Ehsan Ahmed's important article devoted to the role of death, in particular that of François I, in Marguerite's *chansons spirituelles*: “Marguerite de Navarre's *Chansons spirituelles* and the Poet's Passion,” *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 52 (1990), 37–52.

⁵⁷ *Chanson* 7, vv. 5–20; *chanson* 15, vv. 41–55. See also *Correspondance*, 1:58, 138, 197. On spiritual joy in the *Heptaméron*, see Judith Perrenoud-Wörner, *Rire et sacré: la vision humoristique de la vérité dans l'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre* (Geneva, 2008).

to annihilation and mystical ascent, a promise of “jouyssance” that the divine spouse gives to the poor sister, completely crushed in her transitory being.⁵⁸ The paradoxical transformation of death into amorous pleasure is the driving force of Marguerite’s *chansons*. It also provides the conclusion to *chanson* 24, discussed above. This joyfully proclaims the love that awaits the soul freed from its fears of corporal and spiritual death, saved by the grace of God: “La douceur gousterà d’aymer / Après avoir gousté l’amer” (vv. 31–32).⁵⁹

The “delightful transformation” of death into an act of love also provides an overarching compositional unity to the series of *chansons spirituelles*. It is within this thematic logic that one may understand the insertion of the two dialogues into the series in BnF, fr. 24.298: the *Dialogue de Regulus et de Lucia* and the *Dialogue de Dieu et de l’Homme*. The first of these is Marguerite’s remake of Horace’s ode III, ix and brings together two ex-lovers, who, after being in love for some time with other partners, decide to break their respective commitments and to make up again. This renewed relationship is supposed to provide the characters of the dialogue with a “beatitude,” for which one should be ready to relinquish even the sweet rewards of heaven. The light and profane tone of this piece has prompted modern editors of the *Chansons spirituelles* to eliminate it from the series, while including the *Dialogue de Dieu et de l’Homme*, clearly devoted to theological matters.⁶⁰ Yet in light of the importance of the “delightful transformation” of loving death, one should perhaps reconsider this editorial decision. In fact, there are numerous contrasting echoes between the two dialogues, as well as between the *chansons* forming their respective contexts. For instance, the theological dialogue starts with the human being asking its divine “Master” for guidance and enlightenment. This may be a veiled response to the possibly symbolic

⁵⁸ Similarly, in the *Comédie sur le Trépas du Roy*, where *chanson* 2 is integrated into the plot of the play. Amarissime, who mourns the death of Pan, wants to sing “loing de toute musique.” Yet it is still “Jouyssance vous donneray” which provides the melody for her cry of despair (v. 41). Such conjunction of death and “jouyssance” announces the conclusion of the play, where Amarissime joins Paracletis in singing that Pan is not dead but alive: “Ma pauvre voix vous accompagnera / En ceste joye, ainsi qu’en la tristesse” (vv. 541–42), *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Cazauran, vol. 4, *Théâtre*, ed. Geneviève Hasenohr and Olivier Millet (Paris, 2002), pp. 420 and 440–41.

⁵⁹ This verse clearly resonates with the names of Agapy and Amarissime in *Comédie sur le Trespas du Roy*.

⁶⁰ The *Dialogue de Regulus et de Lucia* has migrated to vol. 8 of the *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Cazauran, where Richard Cooper provides valuable notes and commentary (Paris, 2007), pp. 532–34, 661–63.

names of the characters of the first, erotic dialogue, since there is clearly little chance that Lucia (*lux*, that is light, possibly the light of faith) will find eternal solace with Regulus (*regula*, in other words, the rule of the law).⁶¹ Indeed, the second dialogue opposes the constant peace of God's love to the erratic inconstancy of pagan lovemaking. The whole dialogue between Man and God is the story of human Nothingness returning to the divine All in order to forget itself and put its soul at rest for eternity. By contrast, the pagan inconsistency of the characters of the Horatian dialogue seems all the more disturbing. It comes therefore as no surprise that a similarly dramatic representation of change in time can be found in the immediate vicinity of both dialogues. *Chanson* 40, which directly follows the theological debate, is almost in its entirety the desperate cry of a soul unable to recover its past, lost in its present, and unsure of its future: "Je ne suis celluy que suis," "Je ne sçay que je seray," "Je ne fuz ce que je fuz." It is only the concluding stanza which provides solace in transcendent timelessness: "Qui est, est, et le sera, / Le constant tousjours demeure."⁶²

Chanson 34 introduces the dialogue between Regulus and Lucia, while demonstrating that the amorous encounter with Christ is joy bursting out amidst melancholy and sorrow. In other words, the spiritual transformation that is the thematic core of Marguerite's *chansons* is by no means a banal love story with a happy ending. Rather, it is an extreme existential experience in which human suffering becomes bearable only thanks to the miraculous gift of hope. Such is the dramatic journey undertaken by the soul in *chanson* 34. It starts with the contemptuous gaze of those who consider this unfortunate pilgrim an outcast who crumbles under every possible misfortune, bereft of any joy. The first half of the *chanson* depicts her ascent to the "mount of all tribulation," a deserted, wild place, covered with thorns and inhabited by serpents and toads, crows and owls. Here one cannot find man-made beauty either, nothing that might rejoice the "carnal eye," not even a church or temple, any picture or painting. There is nobody to talk to, nobody to listen to, nothing and no one to see. Yet amidst this landscape of biblical desolation, the pilgrim soul is not discouraged. She lives only with her thoughts, which she pursues crying and then laughing, pleased with her own suffering ("Souvent en l'entreprenant

⁶¹ The couple Lucia-*Lux* and Regulus-*Regula* may allude to *chanson* 8, vv. 26–31, quoted above.

⁶² *Chanson* 40, vv. 5, 9, 13, 21–22.

pleure, / Et puis rid, ayment sa douleur," vv. 91–92). All this erratic and strange behavior relies however on her love for her "Amy," who sustains her with faith. In him, she finds the earth lush with green vegetation, all the joy possible, a nourishing manna, and a harmony so beautiful that neither human being nor bird can emulate it. Filled with genuine love, the pilgrim soul lives in her Lover all the more as she dies to herself. The dramatic antinomy tearing apart the *chanson* finds its paradoxical conclusion in the last stanza devoted to the "happy death" of the enamored soul:

Or est la malheurese heureuse,
 Et son malheur faict très heureux,
 Puisqu'elle [est] parfaicte amoureuse
 De son trespas faict amoureux.

The Chant

What kind of poetics corresponds to such a radical and paradoxical spirituality? The question seems all the more important since within Marguerite's elaborate literary discourse one finds inscribed a forceful refusal of literature. While ascending the mount of tribulation where she exiles herself in order to find solace with her divine Lover, the pilgrim soul of the richly metaphorical *chanson* 34 leaves behind all writing instruments and books:

Là ne cr[o]ist papier, encre ou plume
 Pour escrire ce qu'elle veut,
 Ny livre, livret ny volume;
 Toutefois elle ne s'en deult. (vv. 69–72)

As we know, the merry company exchanging entertaining tales in the *Heptaméron* starts this literary venture by excluding all literary men who might impair the truthfulness of the stories with the beauty of their rhetoric. Similarly, the third book of *Les Prisons*, also written in the last years of the queen's life, depicts the ruin of the library of universal learning, which is the ultimate prison built entirely out of books, and in which the protagonist of the poem was jailed before being set free by the destructive and liberating fire of the Spirit.

We must remember, however, that such insistent refusal of literary art takes place within the framework of the queen's most artful poetry and narratives. Hence the paradoxical combination of radical humility and an equally extreme ambition, which Isabelle Pantin sees as being at the

root of Marguerite de Navarre's writing.⁶³ All the evidence indicates that the goal of the queen is to point the reader toward a truth incapable of being expressed in words—i.e., the deadly and amorous union of human Nothingness and divine All—and to do this using familiar literary forms of her day: farce and morality, allegorical poetry and novellas, *chansons spirituelles*.

The search for the artistic forms of expression of Evangelism and of Marguerite's spirituality has increasingly interested students of the early French Renaissance.⁶⁴ The *Chansons spirituelles* add a very specific dimension to the already complicated paradox of speechless speech that underlies Marguerite's writing: I refer to what the French Renaissance called *le chant*, and which may be rendered by the English word "chant," with all its sacral connotations. The poets of the *Pléiade* presented themselves as Orphic *vates*, able to magnetize the crowds and lead them up the chain of being toward the transcendent One. It is very difficult to judge the real significance of such cultural belief.⁶⁵ As much as the idea of Orphic chant shaped the social and political role of the poet in the second half of the century, it is fair to suppose that it was nevertheless "only" a very powerful metaphor. Such indeed is the metaphoric meaning that Peletier du Mans gives to *chant*, pointing out that the rhythmic nature of poetic verse makes it more similar to a song than to a non-rhythmic discourse in prose.⁶⁶ It may be the case that poetic chant had a less metaphoric meaning for the generation of evangelical writers, deeply involved in the ideological debate over the relationship between the sacred and the profane. In a short but fundamental article, Edwin Duval sees the chant as the pinnacle of the expressive modes common to Marguerite de Navarre and Clément Marot, and which include, in ascending hierarchical order:

⁶³ Isabelle Pantin, "L'ordre des fables: l'allégorie dans les *Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Devis d'amitié: Mélanges en l'honneur de Nicole Cazauran*, ed. Jean Lecointe, Catherine Magnien, Isabelle Pantin, and Marie-Claire Thomine (Paris, 2002), pp. 385–86.

⁶⁴ Among the latest, very interesting attempts: Nicolas Le Cadet, *L'Évangélisme fictionnel: Les Livres rabelaisiens, le Cymbalum mundi, L'Heptaméron (1532–1552)* (Paris, 2010); Dariusz Krawczyk, *Dialectique de la parole: Étude de la poésie et du théâtre de Marguerite de Navarre*, Ph.D. diss., Université Paris X-Nanterre, University of Warsaw (2007).

⁶⁵ The question of early modern belief is examined by George Hoffmann in his most recent studies aiming at revisiting the classical works by Lucien Febvre.

⁶⁶ "Car si les Poètes sont dits chanter pour raison que le parler qui est compassé d'une certaine mesure, semble être un Chant: d'autant qu'il est mieux composé au gré de l'oreille que le parler solu: la Rime sera encore une plus expresse marque du Chant: et par conséquent de la Poésie," *Art poétique*, II.1, in *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*, p. 286, quoted and discussed by Vignes, *Poétiques de la Renaissance*, p. 644.

silence, discursive speech, lyric poetry, and the chant. Offering the most adequate expression of the “heart,” that is of the inner self of the two poets, the “poetics of chant” provide, according to Duval, a complement to the “poetics of silence,” so convincingly analyzed by Robert Cottrell.⁶⁷

At first sight, it might seem as if the spirituality of “delightful transformation” does not lend itself to elaborate artistic expression: a soul eagerly awaiting union with Christ through the death of the carnal self should strive not only for ontological nothingness but also for silence. Such is the conclusion Marguerite may have drawn from Brignonnet’s letter devoted to the allegorical reading of marriage. In this elaborate allegory, the human soul plays the role of the wife, who should be kept in strict obedience and submission to Christ her husband. This specifically includes the wife’s obligation to remain silent, since her speech is the allegorical image of earthly temptations, while her Lord speaks the words of the spirit: “De l’unyon du mariage où la femme est muette s’engendrent enfans d’esprit, qui sont filz de Dieu, et de celuy où elle parle, enfans de chair, qui sont serfz. Femme parlant en mariage est, comme rebelle et desobeissante, excluse avec son fruit de la part et portion hereditalle” (*Correspondance*, 2:256–57). It is better that the wife-soul have her tongue cut out than that she speak in place of her husband-Christ; it is better that her limbs be severed than that she mingle in his business. All that is left to her is to moan (“gémir”) in the pain of childbirth. Of course, such harsh images are merely an allegory. Brignonnet is quick to stress that only “spiritual people” (“[les] spirituelz”) are able to understand such language (“jargon”). Only “spiritual people” know that earth, flesh, and woman are “dead in spirit” and that, on the contrary, a soul united with Christ is dead in its body, numbed to any pain and rejoicing (*ibid.*, pp. 257–58).

Although presented here in an allegorical mode, human speech nonetheless has some troubling connotations, since it refers symbolically to earthly concerns and pride. Similarly, in her correspondence with Brignonnet, the queen does not seem overly optimistic about the status of human chant, which stems from our unworthiness:

nostre indignité de le louer n’empesche en rien sa dignité de l’estre. Mais s’y l ne luy plaist rompre noz obstacles, racorder, tirer et monter noz laches cordes et qui plus est luy mesmes jouer, chanter et soufler en nous

⁶⁷ Edwin M. Duval, “Marot, Marguerite et le chant du cœur: Formes lyriques et formes de l’intériorité,” in *Clément Marot, “Prince des poètes français,”* pp. 559–71; Robert D. Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre’s Poetry* (Washington, D.C., 1986).

le psaulme et canticque à luy agreable et se presenter par nous chans à sa voulanté, ce sera grand pauvreté de nostre musicque. Car il est Tout et nous Riens. Ce qu'il faict est faict et tout le demourant de nous contrefaict. (*Correspondance*, 2:107)

Our chant would be pitiful if God in his infinite wisdom and goodness did not sweep away our resistance and if he himself did not tune our instruments. Indeed, it is only he who can fill our Nothingness with his own chant, since all we can do is counterfeit his creation.

Where does this leave Marguerite de Navarre and her *Chansons spirituelles*? Is her chant an example of the unruly speech of a disobedient wife, a moan of suffering, or a cry of joy? Is it the voice of the Lord speaking through the feeble instrument of the human heart, or is it a more or less skillful forgery?

These questions in fact surface right at the beginning of the series of *chansons* published in the *Marguerites de la Marguerite*. The three initial pieces devoted to the death of François I form a steady progression, starting with anxious waiting for news of the ailing king, continuing with a cry of despair in reaction to François I's demise, and concluding with the *rondeau* which presents the death of the brother as a resurrection of the sister's heart.⁶⁸ What is interesting is that, parallel to this funerary narrative, Marguerite conducts a metadiscursive reflection on the possibilities or rather the failures of human discourse. Indeed, the queen begins by saying that it is impossible to express her suffering in speech or writing. She has to hide it because no spoken or written words can match it, and because there would be no more sorrowful text had she revealed it:

Si la douleur de mon esprit
Je pavois monstrier par parole,
Ou la declarer par escrit,
Onques ne feut sy triste rolle;
Car le mal qui plus fort m'affole
Je le cache, et couvre plus fort;
Parquoy n'ay rien qui me console,
Fors l'espoir de la douce mort.

Je sçay que je ne dois celer
Mon ennuy, plus que raisonnable;
Mais si ne sçauroit mon parler
Atteindre à mon dueil importable,

⁶⁸ Ehsan Ahmed neglects the *rondeau*, which indeed seems more devoted to the Resurrection than to the Passion ("Marguerite de Navarre").

À l'escriture veritable
 Defaudroit la force à ma main.
 Le taire me seroit louable,
 S'il ne m'estoit tant inhumain. (*chanson* 1, vv. 1–16)

Yet while it is impossible to express the queen's sorrow, it would be properly "inhuman" to silence it completely. The only way out of this conundrum is in tears, sighs, and screams. These inarticulate sounds are Marguerite's only "rhetoric," the speech and the writing ("mon parler et mes escritz") that she addresses to God (vv. 17–21). Thus in *chanson* 1, writing amounts to managing, literally disposing on paper, her suffering ("sur le papier / Un peu de ma douleur j'ordonne," vv. 102–03).

This anti-rhetoric breaks down at the news of François I's death in the *preteritio* of *chanson* 2. The queen is overtaken by despair and consequently left speechless: "Mon mal ne se peult reveler, / . . . / Il ne m'en fault donc plus parler" (vv. 55–58). Yet here silence takes on an eloquent poetic form. It is therefore not surprising that in the third piece of the series, incidentally using the elaborate *forme fixe* of the *rondeau*, Marguerite regains her voice, symptomatically switching her narrative from the first to the third person. In this dramatic transformation of her discursive posture, she now states that she wants to talk, indeed to talk about death, because death, that is the death of her brother, has resuscitated her heart: "de la mort veult parler: / Car en a bien resuscité son cœur" (vv. 13–14). This reversal of Marguerite's muteness into elaborate poetic speech is grounded in the "delightful transformation" which forms the foundation of the spirituality of her *chansons*. Now Marguerite realizes that her brother's death has changed her fear into a "great desire to die"; suffering becomes sweetness, since she knows that death is the pathway to God. Death takes the form of communion, a sacramental piece of bread that one has to swallow, to incorporate, in order to be allowed to partake of Christ's glory in heaven.⁶⁹ Only ignorant people abstain from this quasi-sacred meal and, indeed, Marguerite did not partake in it when she confessed in *chanson* 2 that she was unable to speak. Now, in the *rondeau*, along with her brother, she swallows the "morsel" of death. In so doing, they both follow in the footsteps of Christ, who says in *chanson* 7: "J'ay gousté le morceau de Mort en patience; / Nul ne le goustera qui ayt en moy fiance" (vv. 29–30).

⁶⁹ See this topic also in the *Heptaméron*, ed. Salminen, p. 447, and in *La Navire*, vv. 246 and 249. See also *chanson* 2, vv. 56–57; *chanson* 3, vv. 6–9; *chanson* 7, vv. 29–30; *chanson* 42, vv. 131–32.

The “delightful transformation” of amorous death is therefore the spiritual fact that authorizes Marguerite’s speech. Nonetheless, speech is only a temporary solution (“En attendant,” *rondeau*, v. 13). Its transitory nature reminds us of Hircan’s reply to Oisille in the prologue of the *Heptaméron*. The pious woman suggests that the ladies and gentlemen spend their time reading the Scriptures as well as singing from the heart and reciting aloud the psalms and canticles inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰ Hircan agrees with this proposition, but points to the complementary need for some more corporeal exercise, which is still necessary because the merry company is not yet mortified enough to do without it. His words reveal that Hircan is thinking about sex, but eventually he settles for storytelling. It would seem that Marguerite’s *chansons spirituelles* offer a similar short-term solution, temporarily dictated by the carnal nature of men, undertaken in anticipation of the human being’s final and joyful annihilation. Hence the strongly articulated discursive structures of the *chansons*, which seem to contradict Marguerite’s initial claim that all her rhetoric consists of tears and moaning.

In fact several *chansons* have a clear argumentative orientation. *Chanson* 33 seems to be the best example in this respect. It is made up entirely of couplets composed of a conditional sentence and of a theologically absurd conclusion in the form of a question (“Si Dieu m’a pour chef Christ donné, / Fault il que je suive aultre maistre?” vv. 1–2). The all-encompassing answer comes at the very end of the poem, pointing unsurprisingly to God, whom one should revere and love. *Chanson* 5 has a somewhat similar rhetorical structure, since each stanza starts with a conditional sentence, while the second half consists in a recommendation addressed to the faithful, instructing them how they should respond to diverse temptations and doctrinal aberrations advanced by the enemies of the faith (“Si quelque injure l’on vous dit, / Endurez le joyeusement,” vv. 1–2). Both *chansons* are thus structured around sharply sketched ideological oppositions.⁷¹ Both argue in favor of specific solutions within clearly drafted alternatives laid before the reader. These argumentative features give several *chansons* a strong rhetorical orientation, transforming them

⁷⁰ “... chante de cueur et prononce de bouche les beaulx psalmes et canticques que le Saint Esprit a composez au cueur de David et les autres aucteurs” (*Heptaméron*, ed. Salminen, p. 9).

⁷¹ The same is true of *chanson* 45, that opposes earthly and spiritual loves, and *chanson* 46, which contrasts in each of its strophes the sorrow caused by sin and faith in salvation for the sinner.

into prayers or, more rarely, maledictions.⁷² It also happens that the voice of the poet addresses several interlocutors within the same poem, as is the case in *chanson* 3, where Marguerite turns alternatively toward God, the human soul, and the community of the faithful.⁷³

Around such argumentative and dialogic rhetorical structures many *chansons* construct fictional situations, either by reusing metaphors and parables borrowed from the Scriptures or by referring to consecrated literary devices and genres. I have already alluded to some of these poetic fictions: the speech the Christ-like Pelican addresses to humanity from the height of the cross in *chanson* 7 or the dialogue between the wise woman and the young hunter in *chanson* 6. Symptomatically, the spiritual awakening of this last character is represented through a metadiscursive metaphor: the hunter understands his past errors and is overwhelmed with faith, much in the same way one catches a well-known tune or discovers the meaning of a literary fiction: "Le Veneur entendit la game, / Et découvrit la Poësie" (vv. 81–82).⁷⁴

The modalities of this kind of interpretation for the reader may vary. All depends on the interaction between the markers of literature and those of spirituality distributed throughout the text. In some *chansons*, the metaphor used is a biblical parable, indicating clearly that the fiction should be transposed directly into religious teaching.⁷⁵ More often, religious and lay imagery overlap. Such is the case with the *chansons* using the paradigm of pastoral fiction, which can be understood as a reference both to the genre of idyllic poetry and to the biblical parable of Christ the good shepherd.⁷⁶ The same can be said about the love songs which mingle lay and religious connotations. In some cases, references to profane and sacred love can still be distinguished by a reader trained in both kinds of literature. For instance, *chansons* 4 and 20 clearly allude to the genre of the *congé*, in which the poet says farewell to a lady and to love. On the other hand, in *chanson* 28 one can easily discern stylized allusions to the

⁷² *Chansons* 15, 17, 19; *chanson* 16 curses the devil and *chanson* 27 curses "cuyder."

⁷³ See also *chansons* 23 and 43. The model for such multidirectional enunciation may be Pseudo-Bonaventura's *L'aiguillon d'amour divine* (1489). Jean Gerson, who published this devotional treatise, instructs the nun to whom it is dedicated to talk to her soul, while transforming such a didactic speech into prayer addressed to God.

⁷⁴ It should be noted that "entendre la game" is an idiomatic expression meaning "to understand."

⁷⁵ Such is the case with *chanson* 10 and *chanson* 42, built around the parable of the prodigal son.

⁷⁶ *Chansons* 14, 26, and 36.

Song of Solomon. There are however texts where the religious content of the song is revealed only at the very end of the poem.⁷⁷ There are others where it does not surface at all, as is the case with *chanson* 36, which is a joyful outburst of love:

O bergere ma mye, je ne vis que d'amours.
 Vray amour est ma vie
 Qui d'aymer me convie,
 Par quoy je n'ay envie
 Que sans cesser l'aymer tousjours.
 O berger ma mye, je ne vis que d'amours. (vv. 1–6)

Following is a series of short quatrains with lines of six or eight syllables, shouting in the most chaotic manner a love which makes the poet laugh and cry, but which nowhere is clearly restricted to a religious register. Even the final call inviting the shepherdesses to love love itself (“Soyez donc amoureuses / D'amour”) does not necessarily have to be understood as pointing to Christ, but might also reflect some kind of extreme neo-Platonism, of which Dagoucin in the *Heptaméron* is a good example.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, such interpretative ambivalence does not seem to be a problem, since the point of the song is merely to chant the joy of love celebrated in one's most intimate interiority:

Ma joye non pareille
 De chanter m'apareille;
 Je crie à toute aurreille:
 Aimez amour ou soyez sourdz. (vv. 35–38)

With chant resembling a scream of amorous joy, there is little room left for rhetorical persuasion or even fictional storytelling. Such a reception of the *chansons spirituelles* is well staged in the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*, where La Bergère quotes, among other fragments of songs, precisely the incipit of *chanson* 36. No wonder the other characters of the play—La Sage, La Mondaine, and La Superstitieuse—are completely unable to understand that the mystical shepherdess sings about her love for God and not about some mundane love affair. Even more strikingly, they seem not to realize that La Bergère quotes scraps of songs, taken out

⁷⁷ *Chanson* 39, based on the opposition, fundamental to Evangelicals, between “ferme amour” and *eros*. See Gérard Defaux, “Marot et ‘Ferme Amour’: Essai de mise au point,” in *Anteros: Actes du Colloque de Madison (Wisconsin), mars 1994*, ed. Ullrich Langer and Jan Miernowski (Orléans, 1994), pp. 137–67.

⁷⁸ *Heptaméron*, ed. Salminen, pp. 57–58.

of context and without any logical order. They persist in their attempts to respond rationally to her fragmented chant, as if it represented coherent reasoning.

Chanson 36 and its recycling in the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan* thus offer a radical alternative to the strong discursive structures of Marguerite's *chansons spirituelles*, discussed earlier. On the one hand, as we have seen, Marguerite is keen to use some basic rhetorical strategies as well as simple literary and biblical references in order to shape the *chansons'* communicative impact and their fictional appeal. On the other hand, the *chansons* tend toward something I would call the "poetics of screaming." The scream is an expressive mode which transcends rhetorically balanced forms and indeed speech itself:

En lieu de te prier
Je ne fais que crier;
Mon parler n'a couleur
Pour monstrier ma douleur. (*chanson* 42, vv. 49–52)

The scream takes the place of a more articulated complaint and prayer:

O Roy de tous les Roys
Devant qui je souspire,
Rien que crier je ne fois,
Ne me vueille esconduire. (*chanson* 19, vv. 28–31)

It is indeed the voice of Christ, calling out to the Father from within human Nothingness:

Car Tout en Rien crie et clame
Voire inenarrablement;
Dieu par Foy Pere reclame,
Qui l'exauce promptement. (*chanson* 21, vv. 18–21)⁷⁹

Tending toward the inarticulate scream, Marguerite's chant is a more radical form of expression than the song. It goes beyond rational discourse and lyrical patterns of speech; it even seems to go beyond music. It reaches, above the melodic lines, beyond the limits of the human voice, where, in the rarefied atmosphere of the highest altitudes, it meets silence. Of course such a scream is inarticulate, impossible to explain, to transpose into a coherent story or logical argument. It introduces the risk of a breakdown of communication, as is indeed the case with the ending

⁷⁹ Michèle Clément, ed. cit., refers this fragment to Rom. 8:26.

of the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*. It fractures the sequential flow of the poem as it disrupts the plot of the theatrical play, where the transition from dialogue to chant is often signaled by a brusque prosodic change. At the same time, the poetics of screaming also permeates some of the *chansons* in their entirety, as is the case for example with *chanson* 18, a triumphant chant shouting out joy at the victory of Christ over evil. Hence the tone of urgency which is clearly audible in Marguerite's *chansons*. The chant is the scream of a soul yearning to be annihilated in God, the painful and delightful whisper of a human being craving the death of the carnal, transitory self and amorous fusion with the beloved Christ. All of this has to be accomplished quickly, if possible now, while the song is being chanted, in an outburst of laughter and love—"Je parle, je ris, et je chante," "Je chante et ris, / Et nuit et jour / Parle d'amour"—in the accelerated pace of a dance—"Chantons, dansons, et courons sy soudain / Que nous passons en sautant cerf et daim."⁸⁰

The Rite

It seems that chant shaped by the poetics of haste and screaming not only transcends argumentative speech and lyric poetry; it also aims beyond the realm of the *chanson* and indeed beyond *chansons spirituelles* as they were known to the Renaissance audience. The model in this last respect was largely created by Protestants. In the collection published by Matthieu Malingre sometime in the 1530s and entitled *Chansons nouvelles demonstrantz plusieurs erreurs et faulsetez*, one finds a song which is a true poetic art of the militant *chanson spirituelle*: "Aultre chanson demonstrant la maniere comment les chrestiens se doibvent esiouyr et chanter selon Dieu."⁸¹ Malingre starts, as might be expected, by dismissing the profane "drunkard's songs." Christian singers should despise the world and its temptations and draw their songs from the Scriptures: "Les chansons soient spirituelles, / De sainte scripture extraites, / Delaissant ces chansons charnelles." He stresses that a truly Christian *chanson* has to rely on faith; it should come less from the mouth and more from a heart touched by

⁸⁰ *Chanson* 13, v. 27; *chanson* 37, vv. 32–34; *Comédie de la Nativité de Jésus Christ*, vv. 660–61, in *Théâtre*, p. 56. On the relationship between laughter and mysticism, see Antonia Szabari, "The Way of Imperfection: Laughter and Mysticism in Marguerite de Navarre's *L'Heptaméron*," *French Forum* 33.3 (2008), 1–16.

⁸¹ Matthieu Malingre, *Chansons nouvelles demonstrantz plusieurs erreurs et faulsetez* [Neuchâtel, 1530–40], no pagination.

the spirit.⁸² Yet this voice from the heart, and which has to be addressed to the heart of the listener, should nevertheless be clearly understandable. The foundation of Malingre's poetics of *chanson spirituelle* is Saint Paul's injunction to edify one's neighbor (1 Cor. 14):

Au faict St. Paul vrayement nous monstre
Comme doibvent les vrays chrestiens
Prescher, prier, chanter aussi,
Tout soit en voix intelligible,
De coeur, d'esprit, en sens rassis,
Dont fruict à tous soit perceptible.

For Malingre, a *chanson spirituelle* should be of benefit for the instruction of the congregation. Such, indeed, is the aim of countless Protestant collections, starting with the previously mentioned *contrafacta* of Eustorg de Beaulieu and continuing with the songs published during the wars of religion.⁸³

A similarly utilitarian approach is visible on the Counter-Reformation side of the confessional divide. Presenting her translation of Marco Antonio Flamino's poetry to Marguerite de Valois, Anne de Marquets desires to convert the pagan Muses to a useful end ("convertir en mieux et en quelque œuvre utile").⁸⁴ The point is, first, to prudently choose a laudable topic—for instance the nativity of Christ or the praise of the Virgin Mary—and, second, to compose poetry worthy of such subject matter. Hence the poet's insistence on justifying her writing, since one is never commendable enough to undertake such a lofty task and to produce a piece of work of the required dignity. The resulting collection of poems is therefore a sacrificial offering, or rather a counter-gift for the redemption that is bestowed upon the poet.

In sum, the prevalent impression one gets from reading the *chansons spirituelles* of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation is that these songs are largely conceived of as works, indeed good works of a Christian poet and of a pious heart. The theological status of those works is here a secondary question: they can be testimony to the poet's election or a

⁸² See also Matthieu Malingre, *Moralité de la maladie de chrestienté* (s.l., 1533): "Car on doit plus chanter d'esprit / En verite St. Paul l'escrit / Que l'on ne fait à pleine voix" (p. Fviir).

⁸³ For instance: *Chansons spirituelles à l'honneur et louange de Dieu, et à l'edification du prochain* (s.l., 1569), *Cantiques ou chansons spirituelles, pour la consolation des Fideles affligés en France* (Pons, 1590), etc.

⁸⁴ Anne de Marquets, *Les divines poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminius* (Paris, 1569), p. Eiv.

meritorious deed which will contribute to his or her salvation. In both cases, the song has a dutiful place within a well-regulated economy of God's grace and human works.

Such are certainly not Marguerite's *chansons spirituelles*. A scream of pain and joy, a cry of death, and a shout of love can hardly be understood as a model of behavior for the faithful or as his or her contribution to the workings of Providence. Even the more rhetorically structured and literarily elaborated of the queen's *chansons* are marked by a kind of hasty disorder which makes them ill fitted for the ceremonial tone of the devotional chant produced by the antagonistic confessions struggling for God's grace and people's attention in Renaissance France.

Yet Marguerite de Navarre's *Chansons spirituelles* also have a quasi-ritual dimension. They can be conceived of not only as texts, but also as gestures which have some kind of sacred meaning and efficacy. Edwin Duval has noted that in *chanson* 6 and in the play *L'Inquisiteur*, fictional characters undergo a conversion while listening to *chansons*.⁸⁵ Such a staging of spiritual transformation does not mean that the queen's *chansons spirituelles* are pieces of persuasive speech aimed at converting the reader to a given doctrinal truth. In Marguerite's spirituality and religious practice, truth is not a matter of communication. In *La Nativité*, Satan mockingly asks the shepherds if they think they understand the Scriptures. One of those poor in spirit replies:

Nous en faisons humblement la lecture.
Maistre n'avons sinon sa charité,
Qui nous apprend toute la verité;
Plus en sentons, moins en povons parler,
Car fort amour faict ce secret celer.⁸⁶

The true meaning of the Word of God is charity that remains incomprehensible to those who have not been touched by God's grace. The shepherds keep the truth secret not because it is a logical assertion but because it is a practice of love which sets them apart from the world. Truth is not a magical formula which can be shared only with the initiated; it is a movement of the heart. This early modern sense of "secrecy" makes truth seem foolish, yet this foolishness is "true," because in the quasi-rituality of Marguerite's spiritual writings, truth is not a statement to be grasped by

⁸⁵ Duval, "Marot, Marguerite," pp. 565–66. See also the editors' incisive remarks *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 4, *Théâtre*, p. 267.

⁸⁶ *Théâtre*, p. 75.

reason, but something which has to be acted upon, played out in one's life and death. Such a pragmatic conception of truth is illustrated again by the clash between Satan and the shepherds, who testify to their faith that the newborn they found in the manger is God:

Sathan:

Je n'en croy rien. Vous venez du sabbath,
Où enchanteurs vous ont trop amusées
Et tellement en doctrine abusées
Que vous croyez ce qui ne sçauroit estre.

Les Bergers et Bergeres *ensemble*:

Il est vray.⁸⁷

Indeed, the poor shepherds have been "enchanted" as they come to believe in something which "cannot be." However, such enchantment is not a magic trick, but the miracle of a faith which blindly trusts and acts upon what is pure folly for the world.

Chanting is such an act of folly. It is senseless: at least some of the words have no distinguishable, logical meaning. Yet it "enchants": it awakens love. In so doing, chanting creates a new language and thus establishes a new Pentecostal communion whereby many tongues are united into one voice.

Such is the ritual impact of chant in the *Comédie sur le trespas du Roy*, written after François I's death and in many respects parallel to the *Chansons spirituelles*. Cast into despair by the death of Pan, Amarissime sings of the bitterness of her sorrow: "Esprit et corps de deuil sont plains, / Tant qu'ilz sont convertiz en plains" (vv. 167–68). This complaint is overheard by Agapy, the embodiment of Charity (*agapè*). He is unable to understand the meaning of the song and even suspects the singer of being lighthearted or foolish: "Quel son, quel chant est ce que j'oy de loing, / Tant que je pers le sens et la parole?" (vv. 153–54). Yet he is irresistibly attracted by the song, in which he hesitantly recognizes a well-known melody, whose lyrics have nevertheless been altered:

Ceste voix là me tire à soy,
Car elle est semblable à la mienne,
Et sens une douleur en moy
Toute telle comme la sienne.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 72. Cf. a similar clash in *Le Malade*: "La Chambriere: Se fier aux promesses / De Celluy qui jamais ne ment. / Le Medecin: Qui vous a appris ces haultesses / Et ce gentil jargonement? / Ce sont parolles d'enchanteurs, / Parler ainsi par paraboles" (p. 256).

Sa chanson me semble ancienne,
 Si sont les motz de neuf ouvraige;
 D'où que ce soit que la voix vienne,
 Ignorer n'en puis le langaige. (vv. 173–80; *Théâtre*, pp. 425–26).

This attraction is not the result of skillful persuasive strategies, as was common in Protestant and Catholic *contrafacta*. Agapy is fascinated by Amarissime's chant because he knows very well the "language" in which the song is written. It is the idiom common to both characters, the "jargon" of bitter suffering and of everlasting love.⁸⁸ "Deuil" and "amytié" are thus united in their lament and in their hopeful expectation of a liberating death. The stage is set for the coming of Paraclesis, representing the Holy Spirit, who finally "enchants" Agapy:

Paraclesis:

Pan est vivant, encores le vous dictz,
 En ces beaux champs et plaisans paradis,
 Où sans cesser avec sa lire chante.

Agapy:

Je m'esbahy en escoutant ces dictz,
 Et ma douleur se rapaise entendis.
 Paraclesis, je croy que tu m'enchante. (vv. 410–15; *ibid.*, p. 436)

The play ends with a chorus of voices that sing in unison of eternal life and of triumph over death.⁸⁹

* * *

In the late 1520s or early 1530s, Simon Du Bois published a pamphlet defining the strategic aims of the "Christian struggle."⁹⁰ As might be expected, the faithful are advised not to trust human traditions but to rely on the Word of God in order to stand firm in their faith. True worship of the Lord is the sacrifice of one's soul, consumed by the love of God and of neighbor ("Là est le vray cult: où l'ame par l'esprit de Dieu se offre holocauste immaculé en flamme de amour de Dieu et du prochain"). Marguerite de Navarre's *Chansons spirituelles*, although written toward the end of the queen's life, seem to stay true to this early evangelical program. They reflect a very private, intimate rite in which the soul, confident in the

⁸⁸ This new language is also referred to extensively in *L'Inquisiteur* (*Théâtre*, pp. 293, 297, 299).

⁸⁹ Cf. *L'Inquisiteur*, where the servant hears different children singing, yet perceives one voice: "Ilz ne sont point entre eulx bandez, / Rien qu'une voix je n'y cognoys" (*Théâtre*, p. 285).

⁹⁰ *Le combat chrestien* (Alençon, 1529/34), fol. 26v.

possibility of union with the divine All, accepts gracefully the annihilation of the carnal self. This “delightful transformation” is an act of joyful love. It is also the source of the chant composed in a new and largely incomprehensible language, words that resonate with voices, tell impossible stories, or turn into screams. They are sung to tunes which are quite old or not yet invented. They cannot “convert” anybody, because it is beyond the power of human works to do such a thing, as it is beyond human power to counterfeit the works of God. Yet they can “enchant” those who are already enchanted by the Spirit of God and who recognize in them the harmony of death and love.

STAGING THE SPIRITUAL: THE BIBLICAL AND NON-BIBLICAL PLAYS

Olivier Millet

Marguerite de Navarre's theater, which consists of eleven surviving plays, shares a number of fundamental artistic and literary characteristics with the rest of her work.¹ Marguerite often writes dialogically—allowing varied voices, varied points of view, sometimes complementary, sometimes oppositional, to be heard—and this lends itself naturally to the stage and to the use of masks. A good deal of 16th-century poetry is marked by a taste for allusions to events in the life of the poet and in the world, as can be seen in the works of Clément Marot and of Marguerite herself. In her non-biblical plays, these references are spoken directly to the audience, which is called to witness and implicated in an allegorical interpretation, dependent in part on current events, that often eludes us today. Marguerite makes innovative use of music and song, which had an important role in both the religious and secular theater of the period. In some plays, she uses her own songs or those of writers close to her, like Marot or Bonaventure des Périers. The dramatic literature of her time, generally composed in verse, also furnished examples of changes in meter or strophic form and rhyme-play, quite in keeping with her own poetic practice. These are well suited to stage use where, along with changes of character, speaker, situation, or theme, they mark shifts in the dramatic action. In the context of her work as a whole, then, her theater appears to be a natural extension of the other poetic and literary genres in which she wrote.

In addition, Marguerite's plays are closely related to her other works notably with respect to the expression of moral conceptions of love and religious ideas. This coherence is suggested moreover by the way her work was published. For example, the sung parts of *Trépas* appeared in

¹ Their titles follow, given as they appear in Marguerite de Navarre, *Théâtre*, ed. Geneviève Hasenohr and Olivier Millet (Paris, 2002), vol. 4 of *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Nicole Cazauran. Also given are the short titles used in this essay; square brackets indicate a title created by modern scholars: *Comédie de la nativité de Jésus Christ* (*Nativité*), *Comédie de l'adoration des trois roys à Jésus Christ* (*Rois*), *Comédie des Innocents* (*Innocents*), *Comédie du désert* (*Désert*), *Le Mallade* (*Malade*), *L'Inquisiteur* (*Inquisiteur*), *Farce de Trop Prou Peu Moins* (*Trop Prou*), *Comédie [des quatre femmes]* (*Quatre femmes*), *Comédie sur le trespas du roy* (*Trépas*), *Comédie jouée au mont de Marsan le jour de Caresme prenant mil cinq cens quarente sept* (*Mont-de-Marsan*), [*Comédie des parfaits amants*] (*Parfaits amants*).

the 1547 printed edition of the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses* as *chanson spirituelle* 2, whereas the play as a whole comes down to us in a single manuscript. In addition, this play is the product of the same personal circumstances as her long poem *La Navire*: both are expressions of the grief caused by the death of her brother, King François I. The Mondaine, a character in *Mont-de-Marsan*, sometimes speaks like the François character in *La Navire*, and *Quatre femmes* in particular has resonances with the characters and themes of the epistles that surround this play in the *Marguerites* and of *La Coche*. These resonances, echoing from one work to another, demonstrate that for Marguerite theater was a distinct form of expression, yet inseparable from her thought and her writing as a whole. What the theater allows is the embodiment on stage, before a viewing audience, of what in the other works is written to be read, recited, or sung, that is, only to be heard or imagined. The result is at times a particular form of writing and an aesthetic which accentuate characters thinking or doing, but which also suggest what is unsaid yet able to be perceived by the audience watching their movements across the stage, their gestures, their interactions, their silences. An effort of imagination is required of the modern reader who must supply these dramatic effects, and no explanatory commentary can replace the stage production these texts call for and on occasion have received in the 20th century (especially *Mont-de-Marsan*).

A number of sources suggest that Marguerite was very responsive to the broad range of dramatic forms covered by the 16th-century term *comédie*, a general designation denoting a play or theatrical performance. She remarks in a letter written in January 1543: "Nous y passons nostre temps à faire mommeries et farces."² Brantôme speaks of the "comédies" and "moralités" composed by the queen and of her dramatic "pastorales" that she had performed by "les filles de sa court."³ Florimond de Raemond, although a less reliable witness, speaks of "une traduction tragicomique presque de tout le Nouveau Testament," and adds that this was performed by the "meilleurs comédiens qui fussent lors en Italie" with "Comédie et farce."⁴ Without delving into the question of the theatrical genres

² Quoted from V. L. Saulnier, ed., Marguerite de Navarre, *Théâtre profane* (Paris and Geneva, 1963; 1978), p. XVIII.

³ Pierre de Brantôme, *Recueil des dames*, ed. Étienne Vaucheret (Paris, 1991), p. 177.

⁴ *L'Histoire de la naissance, progrès et décadence de l'hérésie de ce siècle* (cited from the 1623 Rouen edition, 8.3, p. 849).

suggested by these references, we should note that we are dealing in particular with mummeries: festive court performances with disguises that frequently took place during the time of carnival,⁵ and in which courtiers and those close to the queen took part.

The "Épître présentée à la Roynie de Navarre par Madame Ysabeau et deux autres Damoyzelles habillées en Amazone en une mommerie," written by Marot,⁶ allows us to glimpse this kind of performance given for Marguerite by those in her circle, no doubt in 1534. We have some indications of a performance of two plays by Marguerite herself: *Quatre femmes*, very likely before the start of Lent in 1542 (which that year began on 22 February) and *Mont-de-Marsan*, performed on 13 February 1547 (1548 new style), the eve of Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.⁷ This is alluded to in verse 451, which speaks of "tous les junes d'un caresme." The end of *Quatre femmes* anticipates a ball following the performance, again something which places it in the context of a mummary. *Parfaits amants* is a court entertainment which belongs to the same sort of festive activity, in this case marking the visit of Jeanne d'Albret, accompanied by her husband Antoine de Bourbon, in the spring of 1549.⁸ The final verses of this play imply that the princely couple was present, acting as judges in a Court of Love. The other plays were also doubtless performed, but we have no evidence pointing to the exact circumstances under which this took place. Still, there are indications that suggest a particular time of the year. *Trépas*, composed in 1547 after the death of François I, ends with a liturgical citation from the book of Job, quoted in Latin. The passage is taken from the liturgy of the first Sunday of September, which might correspond not to a performance of the play (about which we know nothing) but to the date of its composition. In fact, scholars situate the play after an initial period of mourning, which the queen spent in the priory of Tusson, in the spring and summer of 1547.⁹ *Nativité* takes place "en cette fin d'an" (v. 992), which can only mean Christmas, as indeed the

⁵ Carnival may be taken in the broadest sense as the part of the year from Christmas to New Year and from Epiphany to the start of Lent, that is, generally speaking, winter after Christmas.

⁶ Clément Marot, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux, 2 vols. (Paris, 1990–93), 2:75–76.

⁷ See the Introduction to these two plays in the Hasenohr-Millet edition.

⁸ For this play also, see the Introduction in the Hasenohr-Millet edition.

⁹ Again, see the Introduction to this play in the Hasenohr-Millet edition as well as n. 76, p. 595.

invitation to “faire feste” at the conclusion makes clear (v. 1282). In sum, there are two kinds of context. On the one hand, there are the religious celebrations of Christmas and the days following, which apply to the biblical tetralogy: *Nativité*, *Rois* (6 January), *Innocents* (28 December), and *Désert* (the liturgical evocation of this episode in the life of Jesus also happening on 28 December). However, we do not know the year in which these biblical plays were written or might have been performed. On the other hand, the remaining plays—either court mummeries or, broadly speaking, farces like *Malade*, *Inquisiteur*, *Trop Prou*, and *Quatre femmes*—must have been performed on what was usually the most frequent occasion for this kind of entertainment: *jours gras* (days when the Church allowed meat to be eaten). Performances were thus associated with two different but related periods: religious festivals of the traditional liturgy and the *jours gras*, in particular during carnival or at mid-Lent, or, more broadly, court celebrations.

Marguerite’s four biblical plays, based on liturgical texts, illustrate a particular moment of the sacred calendar and of the Christian commemoration of salvation: that of the gospel accounts of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Considered in the light of traditional liturgical drama and mystery plays, the originality of Marguerite’s work is striking. She privileges meditational and lyrical aspects to the detriment of the concrete or picturesque elements evoked in the gospels (cf. below). Centered on the figure of the Virgin Mary, who, in keeping with tradition, symbolizes the community of the Church, these four plays aim to arouse a profound sense of belonging to the spiritual community of believers. The discussions they contain are merely a convenient way of setting forth in greater detail all the aspects of Christian redemption, the central theme of the plays. Although they are also rooted in Marguerite’s evangelical thinking, they convey no direct echo of current events, let alone of polemical topics (cf. *Nativité*, vv. 616–19). On the contrary, their aim is to use a meditative mode to detach the audience from such concerns.

This is not true of the rest of the corpus, what we will call the non-biblical plays, inasmuch as their plots and characters are drawn not from the Bible but from other traditions, be they theatrical or literary. In this sense they are “profane,” to use the general title V. L. Saulnier ascribed to them in his ground-breaking edition. These non-biblical plays are nonetheless imbued with religious significance, being intended to serve as propaganda for the evangelical movement. By virtue of their religious content, they remain inseparable from the biblical plays, which form

something of a spiritual background that helps explain their meaning. But unlike the biblical plays, the non-biblical ones touch on current religious, political, familial, and worldly issues—contemporary and contingent for the author, the audience, and, in the case of plays that were printed, the readers of the period. This is certainly the case for the three evangelical moralities, *Malade*, *Inquisiteur*, and *Trop Prou*, each written in a more or less allusive mode. Engaged with the present, then, the plays grow out of the queen's biblical and spiritual meditations in response to a religious crisis, at a time when there were bad spiritual doctors and fearsome inquisitors to be converted to the true faith, as well as representatives of the order of the flesh who posed a real threat to evangelical believers. The present of the plays is also, at times, personal as well as public and courtly, the present of an event that touched Marguerite's own life, as in *Trépas* or *Parfaits amants*. The meaning of *Quatre femmes*, a play which takes place at the time of a celebration and a ball, shines a moral and aesthetic light on what it means to love and to dance during *jours gras*. *Mont-de-Marsan*, finally, uses the circumstances of its performance (the transition from carnival to Lent) to stress the implications of the little three-character drama that forms its first section, played out between debauchery, asceticism, and evangelical wisdom (see below). While the play's second section may refer to a contemporary religious dispute (Marguerite vs. Calvin), above all it conveys dramatically the gulf separating the militant Evangelism of the earlier plays from truly supernatural and mystical questions, which brings us back to the meditations found in the biblical plays (especially *Désert*). Even when they have a religious message, then, the non-biblical plays address the world and its problems, the flesh and its difficulties, human conflicts between the different social and religious "orders" that the characters often symbolize. Marguerite's theater can thus be divided into two distinct groups, the biblical plays and the others, as long as we do not consider them to be separate. Rather, we must understand the relation between them in terms of two different kinds of time, in fact inseparable, which marked the everyday life of Christians in the past: feast days and "profane" days, liturgical celebrations and worldly social life, each of which was part of the pulse—social and personal, cosmic and religious, interior or outward—of Christian time.

Only within this general framework can one understand Marguerite de Navarre's theater, rather than in the light of the dramatic genres to which each play might be assigned. In fact, at this time, before the humanist transformation of the theater introduced by the Pléiade in the middle of

the 16th century, the generic distinctions in use (farce, morality, *sottie* or fool's play, etc.)¹⁰ did not necessarily determine the form of dramatic compositions. In the absence of treatises on poetics defining genres and forms, it was traditions based on the calendar and liturgy, local and social institutions (companies of *sots* and *confréries joyeuses*), as well as theatrical and literary traditions, that shaped performances and modes of dramatic writing. Marguerite certainly did not write her plays for companies of *sots* or for *confréries joyeuses*. We can suppose that the actors available for her plays were limited, at least for the most part, to those who formed the inner circle of her own or her brother's court, especially the ladies, young ladies, and children. She wrote as one wrote for the theater in her time (and as she did with the rest of her poetic production), using modes of composition and style to some extent codified by convention. In *Malade* or *Trop Prou*, for example, we see Marguerite soften the coarse register or the linguistic expressions of madness customary in the farce and the *sottie*, maintaining a degree of dignity, without however giving up belly laughs, burlesque gags, or puns. Finally, the contemporaneous existence of evangelical, satiric, and propagandist plays,¹¹ which use techniques of the morality (personifications, etc.) and a farcical tone to expose, to criticize, but also to edify, provides an important touchstone when we seek to understand Marguerite's originality in *Malade*, *Inquisiteur*, *Trop Prou*, and *Mont-de-Marsan*. The use she makes in the biblical plays of the tradition and art of religious mystery plays¹² is no less personal, once again making the notion of genre inadequate for their appreciation.

The question of the means by which Marguerite's theater has been transmitted to us remains to be considered, since this too can shed light on how the author understood her own dramatic work. The manuscript tradition and printed editions also contain evidence allowing external dating of the plays, by which they can be situated in relation to each other and to the rest of the queen's literary production. The edition of the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses*, printed in Lyon by Jean de Tournes in 1547, was reissued four times during the 16th century without

¹⁰ On this subject, see the articles "Théâtre comique médiéval" and "Théâtre religieux médiéval" in the *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*, ed. Jean-Pierre de Beaumarchais, Daniel Couty, and Alain Rey (Paris, 1987).

¹¹ See *Le Théâtre polémique français, 1450–1550*, ed. Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès, Jelle Koopmans, and Katell Lavéant (Rennes, 2008).

¹² See Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930; Geneva, 1978), 1:434–54.

significant changes (1549, 1552, 1554, and 1558).¹³ It contains two distinct groups of dramatic works. The first volume places the four biblical plays between *L'Oraison à Jésus-Christ* and *Le Triomphe de l'Agneau*. There is no other source from the period, either manuscript or printed, for these plays. Their first modern edition appeared in 1873 (in F. Frank's edition of the *Marguerites*) and the second in 1924 (by F. Schneegans), followed by those of B. Marczuk (2000) and G. Hasenohr (2002). The second volume of the 1547 edition, entitled *Suyte des Marguerites*, contains *Quatre femmes*,¹⁴ followed by *Trop Prou*. In 1547, then, Marguerite chose to publish from her dramatic œuvre only the four biblical plays, a court comedy, and her most enigmatic evangelical play. Assigning them to two separately titled volumes, she also made a clear distinction between the two branches of her theater. The other non-biblical plays remained in manuscript during the 16th century, with the probable exception of *Trépas*.¹⁵ They were printed only in the 19th century and then again when V. L. Saulnier edited them together in 1946, giving them the collective title *Théâtre profane*. They survive in three manuscripts. The manuscript now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12.485, the first part of which can be dated before November 1543, was prepared on the queen's orders by one of her secretaries. It contains *Malade*, *Quatre femmes*,¹⁶ and *Inquisiteur*.¹⁷ The 1547 edition of the *Marguerites* is not based on this manuscript, which was however added to later and includes, in its fourth part, written after 1549, *Trop Prou*. The manuscript BnF, fr. 24.298, containing *La Navire* and *Les Prisons*, also includes *Trépas* and *Mont-de-Marsan*. *Parfaits amants* is found alone in BnF, fr. 883.

In addition, certain plays can be roughly dated with respect to their composition or their performance, as shown in the table below, which follows the order of the plays in the Saulnier edition (but not all of his suggestions as to dating):

Malade: between 1530 and 1535

Inquisiteur: 1535–36

Quatre femmes: early 1542

¹³ See the reprint, ed. Ruth Thomas, French Renaissance Classics (Paris, New York, and The Hague, 1970).

¹⁴ Its title here is *Deux Filles, deux mariées, la vieille, le vieillard et les quatre hommes*.

¹⁵ On this play, see below. It seems to have been published posthumously in 1552.

¹⁶ Its title here is *Autre farce, les deux filles, les deux femmes et la vieille*.

¹⁷ Its title here is *Autre farce: l'Inquisiteur*.

Trop Prou: between 1544 (?) and early 1547 (date of the *privilege* of the printed version)

Trépas: (perhaps September) 1547

Mont-de-Marsan: 13 February 1548

Parfaits amants: 1549

The edition by Geneviève Hasenohr and Olivier Millet (Paris, 2002) places *Trop Prou* before *Quatre femmes* because of doubts about the *terminus a quo* of the former. As *Trop Prou* can be dated before 1547, moreover, it becomes clear that the non-biblical plays were produced between 1535 and 1549. It is also clear that—for reasons we do not know but perhaps because by then they evoked a historical context that was no longer current—the queen decided not to print two plays she might have included in the 1547 collection of her works, *Malade* and *Inquisiteur*.

A final question that remains to be discussed is that of the chronological relationship between the biblical plays and the others. Since the 19th century, the former have usually been considered to be earlier than the latter and thought to date from around 1530;¹⁸ their style, it was claimed, was closer to what was imagined to be “medieval” theater than is the case with the non-biblical plays. For several reasons, this hypothesis seems untenable. With respect to tradition, Marguerite innovates just as much in her sacred plays as in her comedies. Moreover, the fact that biblical stories offer a ready-made scenario, unlike the subjects of her other plays, might easily produce a deceptive impression (traditional as opposed to more modern). Scholars have noted that the queen ordered a copy of the *Mystère des Actes des Apôtres* to be made for her between 1536–38, which suggests that she had an interest in the genre of the mystery at precisely the period when we know she was already working on the non-biblical plays, and perhaps too on the biblical ones. Finally, in *Nativité*, *Rois*, and *Désert*, God is referred to several times as *l'Éternel*. This term can be traced to its appearance in the French translation of the Bible attributed to Olivétan (1535), which introduced it and popularized its use as a translation of the Hebrew tetragram representing the unutterable name of God. The innovations of this translation are apparent in Clément Marot's French rendition of the Psalms: for example, in psalms 1 and 51, dating from before 1539. Marot's influence on Marguerite seems likely, which would put the

¹⁸ For her part, Barbara Marczuk dates the biblical plays to between 1530 and 1540. See Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Comédies bibliques*, ed. Barbara Marczuk, with Beata Skrzyszewska and Piotr Tylus (Geneva, 2000).

biblical plays at the earliest in 1535, a turning point in Marot's career as an evangelical poet. This is the time when the queen began to write non-biblical plays, so there is at least a partial chronological overlap between her two kinds of dramatic writing. Since there is also an ideological and spiritual commonality between them, despite the differences of emphasis just noted, they form two aspects of a single body of work.

Building on these general remarks, we will first consider some broad dramaturgical questions, then the biblical plays, then their spiritual message—which is partially shared with the non-biblical theater—before finally turning to an examination of the plays in this second group.

General Principles of Dramaturgy

Marguerite had a sense of the theater. Her characters sometimes address the audience directly, in keeping with the dramatic tradition of her day, when the relationship between the stage and the audience was not based on the projection of an artistic illusion before detached viewers but sought to render visible on stage the invisible, that is, what the public believed or ought to believe. It is from the standpoint of this theatrical culture and by examining a number of dramatic techniques that she inherited that we can see how Marguerite created, being perhaps the first to do so, a distinctive theater expressing a personal vision. In *Nativité*, God shows the infant Jesus to the audience as well as to the angels, speaking words from the Bible: "Or voyez vous cy mon cher fils eslu" (v. 1216). In *Nativité* (vv. 856ff.), *Rois* (vv. 1295ff.), and *Innocents* (vv. 31ff.), the religious teaching of the dramatic action is laid out for an audience including royalty, clearly the French court. *Inquisiteur* reminds us that the non-biblical theater is also situated within the Christian space-time of the audience when, at the end of the play, one of the children turns to those watching to say: "A Dieu. Le chef de l'assistance, / Dieu, vous doint [donne] bon soir, bonne nuict, / et vivre de [sa] connaissance" (vv. 663–65). Here, the social hierarchy of the audience disappears. The words of the child include everyone, in the name of God, in a classless assemblage. *Trop Prou* goes even further in this egalitarianism, inherited from the farce, when Trop speaks directly to the audience: "Vous qui avez si belles testes, / Si vous ne ressemblez aux bestes, / Vous pouvez bien mon nom savoir" (vv. 51–53). The result is at once comic and enigmatic, which does not necessarily make us like the boastful smooth-talking character presenting himself. *Innocents*, by contrast, says explicitly: "Rois de là-bas, écoutez promptement" (v. 31).

Given the royal status of some in the audience, nothing better suggests the use of a stage set-up traditional in productions of mystery plays. This involved several levels: an upper one (paradise), the place for God (the king of heaven) and his angels; and a lower one—where earthly kings would be placed—divided into several distinct sections which provided a succession of locations for the action of the play to unfold (a road, a crib scene, a palace, etc.). In front of all this, or on a lower level, was the audience, including real kings, arranged according to social hierarchies or perhaps not. “Là-bas” in the passage just quoted refers at once to the lower level of the stage, where we see the house of Mary and Joseph or the tyrannical King Herod in his palace, as well as to the place occupied by the audience, the French court.

The non-biblical plays use the same compartmentalized stage arrangement, except that in this case there is no call for the upper, heavenly level. On a horizontal platform (with the exception of *Trépas*), without visible supernatural or transcendent forces, the characters come and go, meeting as the plot requires, in the kinds of places this would demand. A curtain would suffice to delimit these places, or even a simple written sign indicating, for example, that next to a bedroom there is another room where someone can go to be alone (*Malade*). The relationship with the audience depends on whether the play is a mystery or a farce, yet both participate in a general aesthetic which tends to include the audience in the effects of the performance. A third kind of connection between the stage and the audience occurs in court mummeries when, as at the end of *Quatre femmes*, the play's characters take part in a court ball just beginning. As a consequence, a second-level performance (the play) acted before an audience of courtiers merges into a first-level performance (a court ball). The play's characters return to being courtiers, now dancing either for the others or, if everyone is dancing, along with the others. But even this very worldly play ends with an echo of the religious and edifying message of a mystery play: one of the “Filles” sets out the moral denouncing the human failing which would “chercher secours de créature,” whereas in order to “savoir l'avenir” (which is the issue for the four women characters), one must turn to “Celuy seul qui sur tous ha le pouvoir” (vv. 702–15). At the end of the same speech in this courtly play, the Fille is nevertheless careful to refer to the king (François I or Henri de Navarre) present in the audience: “Ainsi que roi en terre [Dieu] vous fait voir, / Vous doit [= donne] regner au Ciel pour heritage” (vv. 714–15). In this way, Marguerite's theater, whether biblical or not, is always based, visibly or implicitly, on a material and symbolic organization of space which arranges heaven

and earth, time and eternity, hierarchically. It speaks to collective humanity as a whole or to organized political society. The plot which takes place in this kind of theatrical space always suggests a moral, religious, and political parable, regardless of whether the plays are biblical or not.

In the context of this arrangement of the stage and given the absence of acts and scenes in the modern sense to divide the action, the audience follows the actors as they move from one place to another, from one part of the set to another, or within the same set. These movements are sometimes indicated by stage directions but the majority of place changes are implied by the text itself. The aesthetic is one of successive "tableaux," and the characters go from place to place (including within a single tableau) until the action is completed, without any reference to the passage of real time. Something has to keep the audience's attention while the characters move from one tableau to another or, within a tableau, from one place to another, which, for the sake of verisimilitude, implies the passage of a minimal amount of time. This is accomplished by transitional passages in the text, moments during which a different character speaks, someone already in the place to which another is headed. In the biblical plays, for example, God, with his angels, is on the upper level, from where he can see everything, and when the angels descend to earth, on the lower level, a transitional monologue fills the time during which the angels move from paradise to earth (see, for example, in *Nativité*, Mary's monologue, vv. 305ff.). In *Innocents*, Rachel must be on a middle level between earth and heaven during her lament for the slaughtered children, whom she sees without being nearby. This mother, symbolizing Israel, is a timeless personification of motherhood and of Israel; her place is neither in paradise nor on earth among the living contemporaries of Jesus. Her monologue allows time for the children massacred by Herod's guards to leave the stage while she speaks and for their souls to climb singing to paradise (vv. 1000ff.). The non-biblical plays use the same kind of procedures and staging, although the compartmentalization of space is horizontal (with the exception of *Trépas*). In *Inquisiteur*, for example, there is an indoor space (the bedroom of the inquisitor, in slippers) and an outdoor space where the inquisitor, now wearing gloves, and his servant join the children in the cold. Marguerite makes use of these conventions with consummate skill, with only the odd exception, due perhaps to oversight. In *Rois* (vv. 851ff.), Herod speaks to the learned Jews and the kings at the same time, although they are not meant to be in the same space since one group should not hear what Herod says to the other. We have to imagine, then, a complex compartmentalization of the royal palace's interior, with two

separate areas in close proximity. This kind of traditional staging implies the need for transitional monologues, which Marguerite uses very effectively. As in mystery plays, where the religious meaning is dominant, the biblical plays begin and end with a scene in paradise, with the exception of *Nativité*, which begins with Joseph talking to Mary, and *Désert*, in which Joseph's monologue precedes the scene in paradise.

As for the physical stage sets, the texts of the plays require very little beyond general indicators (which can be largely symbolic) needed to identify the various locations. Costumes and the occasional prop, especially in the non-biblical plays, suffice to evoke the real world by means of social differences (age, rank, occupation) or purely symbolic ones (hats, asses' ears, etc.). Some spaces must serve multiple functions and represent several places—a meadow and a road, for example—allowing characters to meet or to part, while remaining physically abstract, as in *Trop Prou* or *Mont-de-Marsan*. In *Mont-de-Marsan*, it is not possible to tell if the shepherdess of the second part is already present silently in the background, perhaps a meadow, during the discussions of the three women in the first part. In any case, they do not notice her. In general, then, the plays are easy to stage, which is a mark not of theatrical deficiency, but rather of a desire to ensure that they can be performed with ease and, in some cases, to interiorize the action.

To conclude our examination of these general matters, we can note Marguerite's acute sense of what movement on the stage can accomplish, as can be seen in certain details of the texts. In *Parfaits amants*, for example, the old woman invites the "Tierce Fille" to come closer ("Et venez ça," v. 105) so that she can whisper discretely what she would do if her lover deceived her with another woman. The audience learns what must only be murmured when they hear the maiden reply: "Quoi? Nouvelle accointance! [= je chercherai un autre ami!]." The young actress might speak these words either in a low voice, like a secret that the audience can hear, or loudly, in indignant defiance, after she pulls away. But most of the actions on stage, including the funniest, are left to the actors' initiative, just as the execution of the musical or sung interludes (whether monodic, accompanied or unaccompanied by instruments, etc.) depends on the musical resources available at the moment of a given performance. Finally, the texts themselves present a variety of meters and strophic forms that, along with the characters' words, mark variations in tone or successive stages of the plot, such as changes of tableau, changes of scene within a tableau, and so on. This aspect of the plays has not as yet received the extensive

treatment it deserves.¹⁹ Marguerite's very varied and subtle use of meter is not merely a poetic element of the text, it is also an essential aid to the actors' memorization of it and to its production.

A final procedure that Marguerite inherited from tradition is the creation of characters by multiplication or differentiation of a single type,²⁰ something found in both the biblical and non-biblical plays. Individuals are picked out from undifferentiated groups of characters in the Bible, like the shepherds on Christmas night or, in the comic theater, like the fools in *sotties*. They are given names and distinctive voices, making an individual of each representative of the general type. In this way, from a single value or attitude expressed by the original type, Marguerite creates a plurality of characters who together represent the plurality of individuals making up any social, moral, or spiritual grouping. This differentiation also makes the dialogue and action livelier by avoiding situations in which two protagonists simply oppose one another, each the sole representative of an antagonistic point of view. Instead of hearing and seeing each give a speech while waiting for the other to do the same, we witness the interaction of several characters, which varies the speakers, makes the exchange of ideas more rapid, and creates opportunities for lively movement on the stage. Trop and Prou together face Peu and Moins; six children confront the inquisitor and his servant; the massacre of the Innocents is divided into four tableaux of increasing pathos (four children, four mothers, four massacring soldiers). Such multiple figures, including the personifications representing abstractions found in the biblical plays, also bring in psychological and spiritual nuances. They are always ordered, sometimes hierarchically, so as to produce a dramatic vision of the moral and religious choices with which Marguerite's plays are concerned. In this theater, whose meaning is always symbolic, they render the abstract human. Thus, in *Trop Prou*, the negative comic pair, Trop and Prou, is differentiated. Trop is the father of Prou, he controls him with a scrutinizing eye, and so on. These two characters also confide in one another, so that long monologues can be avoided, while together they also represent a whole potential group which they symbolize in a lively manner. By such means, Marguerite considers multiple ways of finding or rejecting salvation or,

¹⁹ For the biblical plays, consult the remarks of Marczuk in her edition, pp. 58–61.

²⁰ Anne Armand examines this question in depth in her thesis, *Le texte du conflit dans le théâtre de Marguerite de Navarre* (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris X-Nanterre, now Paris Ouest, 1984). I thank the author for her generosity in lending me this essential study.

in the plays focused on human love, of defining happiness. Critics have noted that a series of monologues and replies responding to each other can become somewhat mechanical; such a series also has the function, however, of exploring varied approaches to a single moral or spiritual reality by letting different voices express distinct points of view on the same subject and thus, also, of avoiding overly schematic oppositions. In its own particular way, in conformity with the workings of the theater, Marguerite's dramatic dialogism represents simultaneously on the stage alternatives that are set out didactically in her non-dramatic poetry and evoked narratively in the *Heptaméron*.

The Biblical Plays

The four biblical plays form a coherent tetralogy telling of the birth and infancy of Jesus Christ—"le Petit," as Satan calls him (*Nativité*, v. 1209), echoing a major theme of the non-biblical plays. As in mystery plays, in particular the passion cycles of the late Middle Ages and most especially those of Arnoul Gréban, from which Marguerite sometimes takes inspiration, scenes of the Savior's coming into the world are presented, their meaning explained to a contemporary audience. Successive episodes are drawn from biblical material contained in the Gospel of Matthew and its parallels, read in the light of the liturgical tradition, of passion plays, and occasionally apocryphal legends that are part of the Christian tradition. In this way, when a defeated Satan leaves the stage and returns to hell in *Nativité* (vv. 1197ff.), this is in keeping with mystery-play tradition. But within this general framework, Marguerite introduces fundamental innovations in several ways. We see this first in the series of four short dramas, each between 1077 and 1579 lines, brought together as a tetralogy of separate yet connected plays: *Nativité* prepares the way for *Rois* (vv. 277ff.) and *Innocents* (vv. 334); in *Rois*, Herod's fate is sealed, preparing for *Innocents* (vv. 1409 and 1453); *Rois* recalls *Nativité* (vv. 45–48 and 1385); *Innocents* summarizes *Rois* (vv. 28ff.); at the end of the play, *Désert* recalls *Innocents* (vv. 1401ff.) when Joseph is informed that there is no more to be feared from Herod and that he can return to the land of Israel with Mary and the child. There is no known precedent for this format. Before Marguerite, there were either paraliturgical nativity plays, devoted to the events of Christmas night, or passion plays which, after a long prologue covering the Old Testament, had scenes on earth depicting the period from the annunciation to the ascension of Christ, that is, the whole of his earthly

life. Marguerite, for her part, while focusing solely on the story of Jesus's infancy, recalls the great Christian themes of redemption and the whole of salvation history. This she does by means of a meditation in which first-person lyricism finds its place, rather than objectively representing on the stage the *gesta salvatoris*. For example, *Innocents* echoes the trial of Justice and Mercy, which in Gréban's *Passion* formed a grandiose opening scene. Here, interiorized in the souls of the Innocents, it becomes the theme of God's discourse when he declares:

Car Charité qui soy-même surmonte
 En eux par moy engravée et empreinte
 Je reconnois, qui ma justice dompte. (vv. 929–31)

The Virgin Mary is the protagonist of this tetralogy; other characters are defined in relation to her attitude and her choices. This is all the more striking as Marguerite did not choose to compose, as she might well have, a series of plays on the life of the Virgin in the narrative, picturesque, and classicizing mode of Battista Spagnoli (known as the Christian Virgil of his day and a model for Marot), although the French translation of one of his Latin poems on this subject had been dedicated to her.²¹ If the Virgin has a central role for Marguerite, this is because, in the queen's eyes, she is best placed to meditate on the mystery of the incarnation and the gift of grace; that is, this choice is an expression of Marguerite's Christocentrism. The same point of view also explains why Marguerite eliminates most of the apocryphal elements, those not reported in the Bible, concerning the infancy of Christ. She makes use only of those that do not threaten her biblical and Christological focus—like the names of the Magi and the fact that they were kings—or those that do not compromise the dignity of her characters. We see here a new sense of what is appropriate for a Christian, in line with a Christian humanist and evangelical sensibility. It seems likely that Marguerite was responding to a call that Lefèvre d'Étaples addressed to those witnessing a performance of the scene of the adoration of the Christ-child by the shepherds. Rather than the ridiculous and gross observers he believed tradition had made of them, the leading figure of French Evangelism urged that the shepherds be seen as believers inspired by the Holy Spirit.²² Yet in Marguerite's case, in addition to

²¹ *La Parthenice Mariane de Baptiste Mantuan*, translated from the *Parthenice Mariana* by Battista Spagnoli (1481) by Jacques de Mortière (Lyon, 1523), dedicated to Marguerite, duchesse d'Alençon.

²² In the Hasenohr-Millet edition, see p. 524, n. 156.

conveying an edifying moral, this sense of what is fitting derives equally from her attention to the inner life based on the meditation of the words of the Bible, an outlook she again shared with Lefèvre.

These dramaturgical and literary choices thus go along with an entirely new aesthetic and spiritual vision. Instead of the picturesque and dramatic theater of the mystery play, with its three worlds (divine, terrestrial, and infernal) that coexist independently of each other, Marguerite foregrounds the way the characters inwardly accept or reject the advent of salvation. Her focus is thus a history of personal salvation, whose subjective dimensions are as important as its historical and collective dimensions. These are also accounts of conversions, since Marguerite always sees salvation as a progressive change which moves forward, fails, or succeeds in each individual case. In this sense, these plays are very theatrical and based on a strong dramatic aesthetic. But each person perceives the signs offered by the basic narrative of biblical events as a private, personal call to be accepted or rejected. Marguerite gives us, then, a story of souls which is played out in the subjective interaction between divine grace and what moves each individual. The themes in question—especially the connections between faith and love or the role of grace—are precisely those that most occupied religious thinkers of the period, in the context of the French evangelical movement or the crisis of the Protestant Reformation. We will come shortly to the presence of Evangelism in Marguerite's theater. For the moment, it is important not to forget that although Marguerite is concerned with conveying a moral lesson, she does this by using the stage not as an instrument of propaganda but as a means of making visible the invisible (the action of grace), so that the audience might contemplate the spiritual and eternal meaning of the incarnation, in this sense becoming its very contemporaries.

Nativité

This play has three parts which take place starting late at night and ending the next morning. The first two are based on the Gospel of Luke 2:1–20. Joseph and Mary must leave for Bethlehem. Joseph recounts events while Mary alone explains their meaning. Once they arrive in Bethlehem looking for lodging, Joseph is turned away by three inn-keepers. Marguerite invents this based on the single traditional inn-keeper found in Gréban's *Passion*. The three are moved respectively by greed, pride, and pleasure.²³

²³ This owes its inspiration to 1 John 2:15–16.

Joseph settles Mary in a shelter and leaves the stage to seek basic necessities. In the other plays, too, Joseph represents the principle of material needs, which must rightly be met, but for which Mary regularly reminds us that the believer relies on God alone. Joseph is thus on the side of faith understood in terms of the active life, Mary on the side of contemplative life, according to the paradigm underlying the episode of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:40–41 (and parallel passages). Furthermore, if Joseph is fully engaged in the faith, he readily accepts instruction from his wife. At the moment she gives birth to Jesus, Mary is alone under God's watchful care. The infant's birth gives rise at once to thanksgiving, an abandonment of self, an illumination, and a mystical ecstasy (vv. 183–203), answered by a scene in paradise. Then angels descend to surround Mary and sing, while she praises God in a lyrical monologue. Once beside her, the angels evoke Christ's future passion. Joseph returns and offers praise in his turn. The next section brings the shepherds, as was traditional in paraliturgical Christmas dramas. Marguerite gives us six shepherds with symbolic names, and here we have an important innovation: half are shepherdesses. They are called Sophon (Wise Man), Elpison (Hopeful One), Nephalle (Watchful One), Philétine (Loving One), Cristilla (Elect of Christ), and Dorotheé (Gift of God). These shepherds represent simple folk, ready to receive grace. Individualized, they are so many figures of the fervent hope of salvation, expressed according to the different spiritual modalities (expectation, love, knowledge, etc.) revealed by their speeches. The angels appear to them, tell them of the birth of the Savior, and the pastoral group sets off toward the infant singing a carol. When they arrive, they enter the stable and worship the Redeemer while praising his mother. Their questions draw attention to Christ's humility. These scenes, in which Joseph becomes the authorized interpreter of Scripture, underscore the typological correspondences between the Old and New Testaments. Once they have given gifts suitable to their station in life, the shepherds take their leave. The last section of the play is Marguerite's innovation, with only one counterpart in an older tradition dating to the 13th century and found in a single manuscript.²⁴ The shepherds encounter Satan, who is at pains to test the faith of these humble elect by means of the temptations of earthly power and knowledge with respect to God, involving questions that produce a real discussion of grace, evil, freedom, and the interpretation of Scripture. Triumphant at the start of the scene, Satan leaves

²⁴ In the Hasenohr-Millet edition, see p. 33, n. 1.

defeated, filled with doubt about the future of his power. In conclusion, God announces to humans (the audience) the victory of Jesus, “qui vous fera jusques à moy saillir” (v. 1220), because he has chosen the self-emptying of the incarnation (“rien en son tout”), and the angels proclaim the victory of the sacrificial Lamb, inviting all to “faire feste.”

As in the following plays, there is no clash in tone here between picturesque characters, in this case the shepherds, and the spiritual message, between the historical account and the entertaining or supernatural elements. Marguerite’s taste for literary unity is revealed also in the arrangement of the play’s scenes and its construction in three parts. She may have acquired this from her knowledge of poetry and her contacts with humanism, but it comes first and foremost from the fact that the unfolding of events in the plays is presented only through its resonance with the individual characters. This in turn depends on their sharing a deep understanding of the spiritual meaning of Scripture, read according to Christian practice and constantly paraphrased, and an immediate acceptance of its significance for themselves and for the world. More than didacticism (of which the shepherds in the medieval tradition were also capable) or a broad range of situations, Marguerite seeks to show how different souls are able to appropriate the message of the Scriptures as a whole, meditated in faith and love, from the Song of Songs to the Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse. As for Satan, far from appearing in scenes of noisy and rebellious devilry, he is presented as excluded, someone outside a joy he wants no part of, who refuses to be “petit” and who argues against the personal and humble appropriation of the Scriptures (“Pensez-vous bien entendre l’Ecriture?” v. 1094). His role is taken on in *Rois* and in *Innocents* by the human figure of Herod, and what he represents will disappear, from the stage if not from the world, in *Désert*. Trop and Prou are, in the non-biblical play that bears their names, the mysterious and pathetic equivalent.

Rois

Marguerite follows the text of Matthew 2 and, in line with medieval tradition, the Magi coming from the East to worship the infant Jesus are depicted as kings with equally traditional names: Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspard. In general, Marguerite does not follow Gréban’s Passion, although she retains the motif of the Magi meeting up on the road before they arrive in Jerusalem, without however, as in Gréban, the accounts they give of their respective journeys. The play’s construction is independent

of the preceding episodes (the shepherds do not reappear) and it has its own initial and final scenes set in paradise with accompanying songs. In the first scene, set in paradise, God sends Philosophy, Tribulation, and Inspiration separately, each to one of the kings, and Divine Intelligence to all three. Other picturesque elements are omitted: Herod's banquet, pseudo-Jewish references, and the like. Marguerite focuses on the religious message of the episode of the Magi-Kings ("Des autres roys l'exemple et enseignants," v. 1140) and to this end introduces the allegorical figures mentioned. Her purpose is to underscore the meaning of the feast of the Epiphany, for which this play was composed, and to declare the universal nature of Christ's kingship and of salvation.

From this perspective, the goal of the eastern kings becomes the search for truth and salvation, a search already actively underway before the start of their journey. Contrary to tradition, they do not see the guiding star until after they have left home and are on their way. Their quest leads to a conversion that Balthasar and Melchior understand the need for little by little, and Gaspard, all at once. Moreover, divine light is transmitted from God to the terrestrial and human world in a way both mediated and hierarchically ordered, following a model with origins in Pseudo-Dionysius. Tribulation, Philosophy, and Inspiration are celestial intermediaries of a lower level, so many angels suited to the three beings they advise and enlighten, whereas on a higher level, Divine Intelligence is united with God and represents the ultimate intermediary required by all. At the outset, having already risen above earthly vanity, Balthasar seeks the true meaning of existence. Guided by Philosophy, he reads books that lead him to God and to Holy Scripture (vv. 200ff.). Melchior is a righteous man, who nonetheless needs to be tested in order to put aside his pride, look within, and experience joy following Tribulation (vv. 251ff.). Gaspard is the type of the sudden convert who, without seeking it, finds faith thanks to Inspiration. Simultaneously, he sees himself as a sinner and, his sins covered by Love, is confident that he is among God's elect (vv. 353ff.). His lyricism clearly makes him the closest to the author. After these three decisive events, the Magi see the star and each is given a suitable interpretation of what it symbolizes. It is at this point that they meet each other and Divine Intelligence, who, while the other three allegorical personifications leave, offers them a detailed *ordo prophetarum* explaining biblical revelation and its prophecies (vv. 625–788). Intelligence then sends them to the Holy Land, leaving them alone with their servants to prepare their gifts for Jesus. The three kings thus represent progress up the Ladder of Perfection, according to the three steps described by Saint Bonaventure: *purgatio*,

illuminatio, perfectio—here three simultaneous processes since the kings travel in parallel until they meet. However, only Gaspard can enjoy perfect union with God. They then make their way to Herod, whom they find talking with a servant in his palace in Jerusalem. The Jewish elders (*docteurs*) incite Herod to kill the King-Christ. During the kings' stay with Herod (who considers them mad), the star disappears, a sign they should leave Herod, who tries to make use of them to prevent the coming of salvation. He is the symbol of the reprobate, as we learn in vv. 1416–20 at the end of the play, but the audience and the kings already know that the tyrant's desperate enterprise will fail. The star reappears, guiding the kings to the manger. They come to Bethlehem, finding the door to the stable shut, but they see the infant from afar, then through the door, whereupon Mary asks Joseph to let them in. Their worship of the infant and their gifts to him correspond to the typology of the three men: Balthasar recognizes in Jesus the all-powerful Creator, giving him gold, a symbol of royalty; Melchior worships the Redeemer, High Priest and victim, offering him the incense of sacrifice; Gaspard offers myrrh, used in the burial of the dead, to God incarnate become man. Mary explains to them the significance of this. After they leave, the Virgin gives thanks to God and the play, continuing its movement of ascent, ends with a scene in paradise.

Innocents

The brief account in Matthew 2:11–18 tells of the massacre of male children ordered by Herod in the hope of killing the new-born Messiah, whose location the Magi, leaving secretly, did not reveal to him. As in the preceding plays, Marguerite draws on the mystery tradition and Gréban, from whom she takes several apocryphal details, such as the murder of Herod's son among the other children and the lament of his nursemaid. There are also some textual borrowings from the liturgy (notably the readings in the breviary for the office of the Holy Innocents). The departure of the Holy Family and its arrival in the desert in Egypt are briefly mentioned (vv. 191–210), without being represented.

The play starts with a scene in paradise, making a transition (by means of the descent of guardian angels) to a scene with Mary and Joseph, who are replaced (v. 201) by Herod and the human drama, in a play where there is no real conversion or discussion. Instead we have lively and pathetic action, with characters (blind executioners and unknowing victims) for whom the real meaning of what they are doing or undergoing remains entirely foreign. Herod and his two learned advisors discuss the question

of slaughtering children younger than two, then Herod talks to his lieutenant. The massacre, performed by soldiers ("Tyrans"), takes place in four successive scenes with four children and the complaints and lamentations of their respective mothers, to which is added the murder of Herod's son. The lieutenant then reports to the king, who learns, among other things from the nursemaid, that his own son has been slaughtered, but without being moved by this for very long. Rachel appears and delivers a long speech, divided into two distinct parts by its meter (a lyrical plaint then a didactic exposition, vv. 651–892). Articulating a supra-temporal perspective, she explains the larger eschatological context and the spiritual sense of the tragedy: the failure of Herod's plot; the triumph over death of the Innocents and of Christ. The play ends in heaven: God will bring the Innocents into his peace on high, "*comme je l'ai à tous croyants promis*" (v. 927); the angels respond and the play concludes with a song of praise from the souls of the Innocents, sung to a well-known melody, that becomes a Christmas carol (*noël*) (v. 1072). Assumed into heaven, the souls of the Innocents are an example of God's free election and the promise of the election of all martyrs and believers to come.

The play thus prepares us for the action, lets us see it, and then offers commentary in enunciative (Rachel, *he*), performative (God, *I*), and allocutive (the Innocents in heaven, *you*) modes. This simple but effective arrangement draws attention to the two successive realms, the earthly—with the pathetic crescendo of the four murders, staged one after the other, followed by that of Herod's son—and the heavenly—where we see the troubles of a world seemingly dominated by tyrants from the point of view of faith. The tyrants here do not need to be accompanied by Satan (as in Gréban) to reveal their diabolical character, nor does Herod need to commit suicide on stage (again as in Gréban) to signify their ultimate failure. Once more, Marguerite's aim is to illuminate the account of the biblical events, simplified and stylized, through meditation on a complex array of biblical texts, some of liturgical origin, brought together in the speeches of the positive characters, as in her other plays, in the form of quotations (in French not Latin), paraphrases, and allusions.

Désert

Gréban situates Mary and Joseph's time in Egypt—shown on the stage merely as their departure followed by their return—during the massacre of the Innocents; their return to Israel follows the last scene of the consequences of the killings. The decision to devote a whole play to

this episode, described only in Matthew 2:19–22, is an innovation on Marguerite's part. The Bible's silence about what happened during their time in the desert is "filled in" by the play's 1400 lines. Marguerite evokes the iconographical tradition of the "Flight into Egypt," or "Rest on the Flight into Egypt," which shows the Holy Family solitary ("deserted") in a protective natural landscape.²⁵ At the beginning of the play, Joseph alludes to material reality when he speaks of his responsibility to provide for his family's needs; at the same time, he insists on the only thing that counts from the point of view of faith, "la vie cachée sous la chair" (v. 53), the real theme of this play. In the Bible, the desert is the symbolic site of divine revelation, of perfection, and of contemplation, but also the site of temptation. The theme (to speak of the interior "vie cachée" of faith), coinciding with the setting, fosters lyricism in the absence of any outside events other than Joseph's domestic concerns and the apocryphal miraculous gift of food and drink brought to the Holy Family by angels. Near the end of the play (vv. 1193ff.), Joseph returns bringing food, which is no longer needed. They are in a paradise on earth: "Ce désert est beau comme un paradis" (v. 1234). Between Joseph's departure and his return, the play focuses entirely on interior events, even if these are presented dramatically. First, there is a scene in paradise with God, Contemplation, Memory, and Consolation, ending with a song from the angels. Marguerite uses this tableau to show how the coming of the Holy Spirit can occur for the faithful, just as Jesus promised his disciples it would after his resurrection and ascension. Meditation on Holy Scripture is guided by Contemplation (expert on the book of Nature; cf. above Philosophy accompanying Balthasar), by Memory (charged with the Old Testament), and by Consolation (charged with the New Testament). It awakens unceasingly in Mary that in which all believers are invited to partake: the illumination of Divine Intelligence, as *Rois* put it. As a result, the heart of the play (vv. 370–1014) takes on the aspect of a song shared by Mary and the auxiliaries who bring enlightenment: Contemplation/Mary, Memory/Mary, Consolation/Mary.

On the stage, Mary embodies the understanding of Holy Scripture, associated, as in the monastic spiritual tradition, with the contemplative life. The unifying theme of this meditation is the renewal of creation and the

²⁵ See, for example, the part of Hans Memling's triptych known as the "Flight into Egypt," now in the Louvre. Mary, standing in the foreground, holds and displays the infant, while, in the background, just as in this play, Joseph picks fruit from a tree (of Paradise) to feed his family. A road creates perspective and leads, in the background, toward the world and history. This image is the closest to the play.

redemption of human nature. Its Christocentric vision constantly reveals the spiritual truth veiled by the material exterior of things and by the letter of Scripture. From this point of view, death is forever conquered, sacred history is accomplished, the cross is triumphant. This paradise is not won by the multiplication of works and by merit, but received by those capable of being open to the new life of the Spirit. This play's spiritual language is the most metaphoric of the four, the most obviously filled with images, the most inspired also by the Song of Songs and its concrete poetics of spiritual meaning.

After the paradise scene and the dispatching of the three illuminating Powers, we see Mary in prayer (v. 219), "en repos" with God. The angels (six of them) approach her singing, and Mary is cast as a sort of leader of their choir. Conversations with Contemplation, Memory, and Consolation follow, then another exchange with the angels, Joseph's return, a dialogue between Jesus's two parents, and the angel's speech announcing to Joseph that the time has come to go back to Israel. During the journey, they meet "L'homme," who tells them what is happening in Israel, where danger remains as a result of the reign of Herod's son. In this way, the characters return to the flux of history, from which their stay in the desert had to some extent detached them. In the evening, Joseph and Mary stop to sleep a little, and the angel informs Joseph that he and his family must go to Nazareth in Galilee. The play ends with commentaries on the name Nazareth, which will be associated with that of Jesus, and God, in paradise, develops this theme before the angels' final song. Aside from the actions on earth (essentially the activities and encounters of Joseph), all the others are spiritual, rendered visible on the stage. This is no doubt why in this play, unlike the others of the tetralogy, theatrical vocabulary is used to indicate the interior truths of faith. Mary exclaims to the audience about the "bow"—simultaneously the rainbow as biblical sign of the covenant with God and the bow which Divine Love uses to shoot its arrows: "De l'Eternel apprenez tous ce jeu" (v. 669), exactly as she does before us on the stage. In verses 1003ff., she once again invites the audience to imitate her in what she herself embodies on the stage (the generation in oneself of the Divine Word):

Croyez, recevez,
Portez, concevez
Dieu par sa Parole;
Et sentez le en vous
Père, frère, espoux,
Qui joue son rôle.

The theater here serves to demonstrate how the evangelical and mystical spirituality, of which Marguerite is the spokesperson, is filled by the dynamism of true life. After the dramatic action of *Innocents* and its division between heaven and earth, *Désert* shows us how earthly life and heavenly life can come together in a fertile and mysterious harmony.

Spiritual Themes in the Theater of Marguerite de Navarre

The themes that are made explicit in the biblical plays also appear in the non-biblical ones, where they are considered from a different perspective or sometimes present only as allusions. For this reason, a discussion of these themes makes a good transition between the two groups of plays. As with the queen's other works, her theater contains ideas and images from very diverse spiritual traditions, which she brings together without contradiction since her aim is not to fit them into a precise dogmatic theology. We should not be surprised, then, to find ideas from Pseudo-Dionysius and Luther coexisting, to give but one example.²⁶ Nevertheless, the historico-religious context of these themes and their formulation sometimes gives them an acute, even polemical, relevance, so that evangelical propaganda and the most contemplative ideas and attitudes are bound up together.

Everything is based on the Bible and on Scripture alone, proclaimed as the source of the one and only truth and, at the same time, as noted above, an object of meditation according to complex patterns. On questions of faith, Marguerite's theater recognizes no authority apart from Scripture, even if the Scriptures are interpreted according to diverse traditions. Marguerite displays clearly her distrust of intellectual interpretations and scholastic authorities who assert their own competence and a monopoly over biblical interpretation: "Mais chacun a ou son parler glosé, / Ou déprisé ou comme nul tenu" (*Nativité*, vv. 893–94). This theme is polemized, albeit allusively, in *Malade* and *Inquisiteur*. The crucial

²⁶ The various spiritual sources for Marguerite's theater can be found in the index of names of the Hasenohr-Millet edition under Saint Bernard, Guillaume Briçonnet, Raymond Jourdan, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Ludolphe le Chartreux, Martin Luther, Marguerite Porete, Pseudo-Denys. See also Barbara Marczuk-Szwed, "Les motifs mystiques dans le théâtre biblique de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992: Actes du Colloque international de Pau, 1992*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan, 1995), pp. 403–21.

role of the Bible does not prevent other books—"Livres de toute sorte qui parlent du grand Dieu" (*Rois*, v. 373)—from appearing as preparatory to its message, as can be seen in the case of Balthasar in *Rois*. But even before these other books, Contemplation has Balthasar look carefully at the "grand livre" of creation (*Rois*, vv. 142, 380ff.), since the soul must discover in God the principle of all existence, of which he is the source and final point of return. To contemplate the world in its beauty and diversity as divine creation and to meditate on Scripture are related since together they reveal the harmony of the "three books" (Creation, Old and New Testaments; *Désert*, v. 1291), whose source is the one Divine Logos. An authentic reading of Scripture occurs in a spirit of charity—in accordance with a tradition that can be traced back to Saint Augustine—and it seeks not to feed debate but to enable the faithful to live the secret life of the Spirit. To give up *cuyder* (see below) and to understand Scripture are one and the same thing (*Rois*, vv. 51ff.; *Trop Prou*, vv. 497ff.). The third shepherd of *Nativité* tells Satan, who questions the capacity of a humble person like him to understand the Bible:

Nous en faisons humblement la lecture.
 Maistre n'avons sinon sa charité,
 Qui nous apprend toute la vérité;
 Plus en sentons, moins en povons parler,
 Car fort amour fait ce secret celer. (vv. 1095–99)

Negative theology, of Pseudo-Dionysian origin, becomes a hermeneutic principle that distances Marguerite both from scholastic theology and from the biblicism of the Protestant Reformation. *Trop Prou* strongly affirms the impossibility of speaking of the lived experience of the Scriptures (v. 514), and the shepherdess of *Mont-de-Marsan* poetically and dramatically illustrates the same principle. This kind of personal reading, indispensable for all, is nonetheless not individualistic, as is clear from the use of the first person plural (*nous*) in the passage from *Nativité* quoted above and, in *Mont-de-Marsan*, from the intermediary role of the Sage in relation to the Mondaine and the Superstitieuse. In this process, the humble are themselves privileged intercessors, as can be seen from the social status of the servant in *Malade* or the role of the children in *Inquisiteur*. Marguerite's originality seems to lie in combining the spiritual hermeneutics of monasticism—with its affective and spiritual tradition of *lectio divina*—with a democratization of its ideals. This is no longer the preserve of orders of contemplatives (of, so to speak, professionals) but rather of all humble folk seeking truth and love, which also justifies the translation

of the Bible into the vernacular. In *Rois*, God sends Parfaite Intelligence to offer of his “secrets cachés aux Ecritures / ... à tous salutaires lectures” (vv. 98ff.). The reading of the Bible by the humble (that is, “ignorant” women, people with no academic training and no knowledge of Latin) must be in a French translation, as is implied by the gift of a Bible by the Sage to the two other women in *Mont-de-Marsan* (vv. 376, 544ff.). The Bible also features more than once as a book on stage (*Rois*, vv. 628ff.). In the context of the period, this translation could be that of Lefèvre d’Étaples (1530) or some other French translation prepared according to Christian-humanist principles. This is precisely what the inquisitor objects to: “Ce savoir neuf, qui le nôtre surmonte,” that of learned men “Qui mieux que moi ont l’Ecriture sainte” (*Inquisiteur*, vv. 5, 12) and who, in opposition to the scholastics, declare their own enlightened knowledge of the Bible: “Toujours leur faut alléguer l’Ecriture” (ibid., v. 14). The model of this kind of translation is Marot’s Psalms, the source of the paraphrase of psalm 3, which the children sing at length in *Inquisiteur*. They know the Bible by heart, just like the liturgy of the Church, which equally inspires the biblical plays and which furnishes the closing words of *Trépas*. Here, too, Marguerite’s religious culture consists in a democratization of monastic spirituality, stripped of its asceticism, in the context of a militant Evangelism.

The link between paradise and earth, both dramaturgically and spiritually, is the Virgin Mary. She is the head of the choir of angels (*Désert*, vv. 358ff.), rather than the intercessor for the people of God (of this there is only one example in *Désert*, vv. 509ff.). Worthy of reverence because of her divine maternity (*Désert*, vv. 296ff., 527ff.), she benefited from the immaculate conception (*Désert*, vv. 119ff., 916ff.). Filled with God by the Holy Spirit, she conceives the divine Word and so becomes, as the Virgin-mystical soul, the model for all believers (*Nativité*, vv. 199ff., 1029ff.); she embodies for Marguerite what one must be, *rien*, so that one can be filled with the *Tout* that is God, a message conveyed also by the children in *Inquisiteur*. This reality is accomplished for Mary in a mystical ecstasy (*Désert*, v. 295), as it is for the shepherdess in *Mont-de-Marsan*, who is also “ravie.” For Mary, union with God tends to become a constant state, as it is for the shepherdess (*Mont-de-Marsan*, vv. 747ff.). The opposition of *Tout* and *Rien* no doubt comes from Guillaume Briçonnet.²⁷ The dichotomy gives rise to antitheses that, by their metaphoric and constantly varied

²⁷ Anne Armand notes its appearance in Briçonnet’s letter of 10 July 1521 (*Le texte du conflit*).

profusion, mark the limits and the inadequacy of human language and human reason, as Pseudo-Dionysius explained. This is why silence plays so great a dramaturgical and thematic role in the queen's theater. More often than not it is the language of human love that offers the characters a means to express their lives in God: because God is love, according to the Gospel of John, but also because Marguerite does not shy away from formulations suggesting courtly love or the love song (perfect love, the lover, the friend, etc.) to designate life with God, guided by traditional allegorical readings of the eroticism of the Song of Songs, and, in the case of *Mont-de-Marsan*, echoing Marguerite Porete's *Miroir des âmes simples*. The vocabulary and the images make use of the most sensual aspects of the lover's experience (fire, kisses, pleasure, repose). This mystical language is of a piece with the optimism of the salvation theology and the moral theology of Marguerite's theater. What leads to God is the beauty of the world, not human misery; original sin is a happy fault (*felix culpa*: *Désert*, v. 652), as a result of which we have received the abundance and the happiness of grace; faith is essentially pleasure, joy, song, and laughter, even in the midst of trials.

Mary, the humble servant of the Magnificat,²⁸ is the key figure among the humble folk who fill Marguerite's plays as privileged recipients of divine grace. Three aspects of their humility are highlighted, both dramatically and thematically, through its association with the "idiot," that is, someone simple and ignorant; childhood; and the fool for God. Women, for example, shepherds, or the servant in *Malade* embody, by virtue of their sex or their social status, the first of these. Except in *Rois*, these "idiots" all appear as outsiders, those whom learned men or the proud seek to marginalize. Marguerite often stresses this opposition in social terms, even if, in the case of *Peu* and *Moins*, the "work" that these humble folk do is also a symbol of the trials they undergo, which mark them as among the elect (*Trop Prou*, vv. 253–66). The Superstitieuse in *Mont-de-Marsan* is valorized mostly by her admission of her ignorance, her "idiotie" (vv. 546–54, cf. v. 879). Childhood (cf. above, Jesus "le Petit") is a second distinctive trait, which largely corresponds to the first. God calls his angels "children" (*Nativité*, v. 293) and Marguerite's children are those who call God "Father." Alongside the children of *Inquisiteur*, we may also place the "fols" of *Trop Prou*, whose behavior, if not their age, is childlike (laughter [cf. *Désert*, v. 1535], playing games, and so on), and the shepherdess

²⁸ For a discussion of Mary in the biblical plays, see the Marczuk edition, pp. 51–57.

of *Mont-de-Marsan*, whose language at times approaches inarticulate babble. Childhood implies an absence of concern for oneself or the future (cf. *Quatre femmes*), the lack of spiritual qualms, and indifference to the world and its false values. It allows play, laughter, and song, along with pleasure. This folly is ultimately that of “fools for God,”²⁹ which overturns the criteria of those who think themselves wise, beginning with Herod, and who are wordly fools. These carnal types accuse the spiritual ones of madness or sorcery. The opposition between the two groups, those of the spirit and those of the flesh, highlights the dynamic process of conversion—a central religious theme, as we have noted, for example in the case of the Magi-Kings. The shepherds of *Nativité* sing of their own conversion from the old Adam to the new (vv. 676ff.). What most often characterizes conversion is its “sudden” nature—a frequent term, for example, in *Malade* or *Inquisiteur*—which emphasizes the unforeseeable and overwhelming nature of grace, as do the words *saut/saillir*. The impossibility of self-conversion is the dramatic subject of *Trop Prou*; *Mont-de-Marsan* combines the two problematics (conversion and the impossibility of self-conversion). In *Trépas*, exceptionally, Marguerite stages her own conversion from despair to hope.

Conversion is required to escape from *cuyder*: man’s sinful confidence in himself, a source of illusion and pride. Sin is justified by God, who hides it in his grace, and the faithful, although justified, are still sinners, even if Marguerite does not stress this Lutheran theme. Sin can only affect the mortal body, not the regenerate heart, a heterodox position from any perspective (*Nativité*, vv. 1136–55; cf. *Mont-de-Marsan*).³⁰ Marguerite assimilates sin to *cuyder* (*Nativité*, vv. 1144ff.), which does not accept that God alone has being, “estre” (*Innocents*, v. 1056). The opposite of sin is faith, understood as an absolute trust in the Word of God and the assurance of salvation (Lutheran themes). Marguerite speaks of faith using the terminology current in evangelical circles (“ferme foy,” “vive foy”), so as to stress, along with the unshakable certitude of faith, its link to a new life in love. The idea of merit deriving from good works is rejected (*Nativité*,

²⁹ See the article by Barbara Marczuk, “Vrayement voicy de plaisans fous’: La folie dans le théâtre de Marguerite de Navarre,” in *Quêtes personnelles et actualités contemporaines dans le théâtre de Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Olga Anna Duhl, *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 26.4 (2002), 33–49.

³⁰ In her edition, Marczuk notes the ideas that Marguerite shares with the *libertins spirituels* (pp. 42–44). Only this last one seems incontestably heterodox. The others might arise from a free interpretation of the Bible, without doctrinal implications, from tradition, or from evangelical notions in general circulation.

vv. 172ff.; *Rois*, vv. 759ff.; *Inquisiteur*, vv. 431ff.; *Mont-de-Marsan*); grace is a pure gift of God resulting from divine election (a recurrent theme in the biblical plays), founded on predestination, as is mentioned in passing (*Rois*, vv. 1417–20). These last themes, along with the question of granting all the faithful access to the Scriptures, concern matters that were actively debated around Marguerite from the early 1520s, and some of the non-biblical plays also do not shy away from discussing them.

The Non-Biblical Plays

Le Malade

Malade, whose script seems to have been revived for a performance in 1558, was written as a parable of current events. It belongs to a series of evangelical or Protestant plays, in which the gospel cures a disease of the Christian faith.³¹ *La Farce des théologastres* (between 1526 and 1528), perhaps written by Louis de Berquin, no doubt suggested the idea to Marguerite. Here, however, there are no personifications such as Berquin used (his work includes *Foi*, *Malade*, and *Texte* as characters). Rather, the characters are types, the sick man, his wife, a servant, and a doctor, which gives the play the air of a symbolic farce. Its literal meaning, amusing even if it elicits smiles rather than belly-laughes, leads the reader to a symbolic interpretation. Of all Marguerite's theater, only this play is written entirely in eight-line strophes of eight-syllable verses, which also contributes to a relatively farcical and simple atmosphere. The author draws on the biblical status of physical illness as potentially indicative of a state of sin, thereby rooting evangelical propaganda concretely in the human condition.³² Scholars believe the play was probably written during a period of intense religious hope, perhaps even in 1535 after the *affaire des placards*. There is no allusion in the play which would tie it to an exact date, however, and the image of faith as medicine is also found in the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (1531) and the biblical plays.³³

³¹ See Jelle Koopmans, "L'allégorie théâtrale au début du XVI^e siècle: le cas des pièces 'profanes' de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Quêtes personnelles et actualités contemporaines*, pp. 65–89 (pp. 80ff.).

³² On disease and medicine in this play, see Colette H. Winn, "Témoignage de l'actualité médicale du temps: *Le Mallade* de Marguerite de Navarre (c. 1535)," in *Quêtes personnelles et actualités contemporaines*, pp. 91–111.

³³ *Nativité*, vv. 850ff.; *Rois*, vv. 338 and 1251ff.; cf., by contrast (disease and an implicit absence of faith), *Quatre femmes*, vv. 1259ff. and 424ff. The medical metaphor occurs also in *Trop Prou*.

The text of 438 lines is simple. A man, feeling ill, sends his wife to fetch the doctor. During her absence, their servant criticizes those who look to the saints or to false doctors and, in a dialogue that becomes a kind of spiritual catechism, she tells the patient to turn to God alone. The sick man takes this message to heart and, feeling himself cured, decides to rest. The doctor, as he makes his way to the house, declares that he alone can treat the sick. He awakens the patient, who once again feels ill. The doctor prescribes bleeding, which frightens the sick man; his wife suggests folk remedies. While the doctor is writing the prescription, the servant once again instructs her master. Returning to collect his fee and finding the sick man cured, the doctor accuses the other three of having had recourse to illegitimate means, to old-wives' cures, spells, or the invocation of a saint. The servant, laughing, explains what she has done, but the doctor and the wife fail to understand. Without denying that a miracle is possible, the doctor declares it unlikely. After his departure, the sick man himself explains the lesson to be drawn from the events: the need to put aside all human opinion in favor of faith in God alone. The doctor, whose financial interests are involved, convinced of his own superiority as a man and as an expert, is satirized, but without malice. The wife, a prisoner of her own superstitions and her respect for authority, still takes care of her husband with affection. The servant, the socially humble character, triumphs, as her laughter suggests, but this is the laugh of faith and charity, not of vengeance. Her words edify and cure; they are a form of evangelical propaganda which assumes the air of a meditative sermon. The respective limits of popular medicine (religious practices tending toward superstition) and learned medicine (scholastic learning) are pointed out. Only the gospel brings life and the simplicity of ignorance predisposes to faith. In the process of religious conversion (that of the sick man), which the play illustrates, "l'assurée foi" consists in confessing one's sins to God (without need for the intervention of any hierarchy, here represented by the doctor) in order to receive the Good News of forgiveness freely given. In this way, Marguerite declares her position in relation to contemporary debates, started by the Protestant Reformation, on the question of the nature of penitence or repentance. This is represented, through the sinner's experience of his diseased condition, as a conversion produced by grace, and which consists in receiving divine mercy by means of faith—confidence placed in God alone and attested to by biblical revelation. *Malade* is the play whose religious content is closest to Lutheran Evangelism, but it also develops other themes dear to the author: the opposition between God-All and Nothingness, and the aspiration to an entirely spiritual life lived

in charity. Marguerite in any case represents on stage the blindness of traditional authorities and, more broadly, of human reason in the face of the liberating power of the gospel, revealed here by a woman in a series of lively scenes well organized as dramatic action.

L'Inquisiteur

Inquisiteur, which belongs to the same historical context of religious hope, contains precise allusions that must have been clear for its contemporary audience. Noël Béda has been suggested as the model for the inquisitor, but others might also be considered. The play alludes to a climate of terror directed against Evangelicals while still foreseeing a positive outcome, which would date it to 1535–36. This time, the satire of the Church establishment is sharp, but the confrontation between the inquisitor and the children (six plus “le petit enfant”) once again leads to a conversion to the gospel, here unexpected since that of the inquisitor’s servant is supplemented by that of the inquisitor himself. Childhood stands for faith, in line with the gospel text of Matthew 19:14—“Suffer little children . . . to come unto me”—and the conversion of the servant and his master stands for birth into a new life, as described in John 3:3—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”³⁴ The children are counterbalanced by the inquisitor who is also a complex type, synthesizing several literary or biblical figures: the hypocritical monk, rather like Faux-Semblant in the *Roman de la Rose*, Saint Paul as a persecuting rabbi suddenly converted to the Christian faith, and Nicodemus, the learned Pharisee who in the Gospel of John visits Jesus at night and is called by him to an experience of rebirth in the Spirit of God. The servant, the first to be converted, resembles the servant in *Malade* by virtue of his humble social status. He also acts as an intermediary between his master and the children. The nature of those who represent the gospel, children at play, prevents any religious analysis coming from them (except in vv. 435–70); most of the content is therefore allusively metaphoric, in a script which is itself a kind of parable, as was the preceding play.

Marguerite couches the play text of 671 lines in poetry made enigmatic by allusions to current events, puns, and the misunderstandings that pepper the dialogues between the inquisitor and the children. The object of the conversion concerns the connection between faith and Holy Scripture,

³⁴ Quotations from the Bible are from the Authorized King James Version.

but above all how to live one's relationship to God in a state of confidence and spiritual abandon, represented by the children. At the start of the play, the inquisitor bemoans the current state of affairs, the crisis affecting the authority of his institution and the growing prestige of the "new learning," that is, contemporary biblical and Christian humanism. His only response to these adversaries is repression. He decides to take his mind off things by going outside and asks his servant (whom he often beats) to bring his shoes and gloves to prepare himself for the cold. The valet points to the children playing outdoors who show no sign of feeling the cold. Some of the children have names that seem to allude to Clément Marot (Clérot) and perhaps Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Jacquot). The inquisitor reproaches the children who, he says, would do better to study than to play. The children defend their choice of activity with assurance, using words which allude to Marguerite's spiritual gospel. This marks the start of an inquisitorial interrogation ("Mon enfant, qui est votre père?"), in the course of which the inquisitor, growing ever more threatening, fails to understand the evangelical meaning of the answers he is given. Finally, the children sing psalm 3 in Marot's translation. This song brings about the transformation of the servant, who chooses faith, joy, and laughter. A conversation between the servant and his master reverses their roles: the inquisitor allows the servant to catechize him, before turning back to the children who make fun of him. At this point, he appeals to the "Petit enfant," the seventh of the group, who, when questioned, replies in baby language: God is "Papa," in him we find "Dodo" (sleepy time). The other children join in and finish the lesson in Marguerite's catechism. The inquisitor is converted and his words take on a lyrical quality, in an exchange with the other characters that ends in a song sung by all: the Canticum of Simeon (Luke 2:29–32) in the French translation of Bonaventure des Périers. The play concludes with all leaving together for the house of union and charity, and an allusion to partaking in the Eucharist, an issue that at that moment divided the various branches of Christendom (Old Believers, Lutherans, Reformed). An experience of song is thus at the root of the transformation of hearts, and we hear in this play the hopes Marguerite placed in the efficacy of Marot's ongoing adaptation of the Psalter. Song transposes the children's pleasure and play into a biblical and spiritual language. Its power is contagious and inspiring (as Plato claims of inspired poetry); it is an image of faith which asks no more than to receive from God, without having earned it, the happiness of new life. In this way, *Inquisiteur* combines commentary on current events (repression and the French Evangelicals' flight abroad), a complex spirituality

built of evangelical theology (from both Paul and John), and Franciscanism (simplicity and the spirit of childhood) to create a parable of the human condition using social hierarchy and age differences.

Trop Prou Peu Moins

This is the most enigmatic of Marguerite's plays. A variety of historical interpretations have been proposed for its allusions, but these are neither consistent with themselves nor with all the elements of the contexts evoked. For this reason, the play can only be very loosely dated to before 1547. The characters in this play of 925 lines, written mostly in octosyllabic verse, consist of four personifications whose names are drawn from a particular part of speech, i.e., adverbs: Trop (Too Much), Prou (A Lot), Peu (A Little), and Moins (Less). This technique is found in the dramatic genres of the morality play and the *sottie*; in this case, they must be understood in relation to the fundamental referent of Marguerite's work, *Tout* and its opposite *Rien* (evoked in vv. 309–10), requiring us to read the play as a religious allegory. Peu and Moins are on the side of the "Petit" (Christ) at once socially (they belong to the rustic world of shepherds) and spiritually: they are in fact "fools for Christ." This does not rule out a political reading. Ostrich eggs (v. 390) have been associated by scholars with Austria and Charles V. He and Pope Paul III would thus be the menacing figures represented in part by Trop and Prou.³⁵ But Trop himself suggests that the eggs are insignificant (vv. 393ff.). Given their taste for power, Trop and Prou certainly represent a form of religion that threatens Marguerite's spiritual Evangelism. What they symbolize is greater than the repressive power of the inquisition, however, and should rather be identified with the "wisdom of the world." As for Peu and Moins, their apparent folly and their constant laughter reveal their roots in the *sottie*, itself close to the morality by virtue of their common use of allegory. The play's action forms a figurative structure which is used to symbolize a certain state of the world and of humanity in a critical and mocking way. It uses puns, gestures, and practical jokes, whose victims will finally be Trop and Prou. The essential physical attributes of the characters are for Peu and Moins, horns, and for Trop and Prou, ears, suggesting links to the carnival celebrations between Christmas and New Year (the Feast of the Ass, the triumph of children),

³⁵ Olga Anna Duhl adopts this interpretation in the light of a letter the queen wrote in 1542. See "La polémique religieuse dans le théâtre de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Le Théâtre polémique français, 1450–1550*, pp. 190–210 (p. 201).

as well as to the *sottie*, whose *sots* wore hats with ears as markers of their folly and their impunity. Trop and Prou also wear horns, which they claim increases their status. In contrast, the horns of Peu and Moins indicate above all, as in the Bible, strength of faith, here tied to hope and charity, as well as the crown of thorns worn by Christ during his passion. Each of these paired characters is differentiated (Trop and Prou, Peu and Moins are individualized), which makes the confrontations between the pairs more nuanced and lively.

Trop and Prou begin the play by presenting themselves to the audience by means of a series of riddles. They recognize each other and meet the remaining two, who have similarly recognized each other and presented themselves to the audience. Trop and Prou show disdain and threaten the second pair of characters. They unkindly point out their horns (which might also be taken as a sign of cuckoldry), without understanding the terms in which Peu and Moins praise them. This attribute signifies a mystery that only laughter can express. Peu and Moins reply to the mockery and point out that Trop and Prou have ears. A debate ensues over what separates them in terms of these attributes, and events evolve from this. Trop and Prou express a desire to know that encounters an obstacle in Peu's and Moins's inability to articulate the source of their joy. Trop and Prou admit that they are sad not to be able to hide their ears. Invited to put on appropriate horns and to relinquish the cares of this world and their concern for appearances, they turn down this radical solution as well as a second proposition they find too painful to consider: putting the horns of Peu and Moins into their ears. This gives rise to some lively action. Incapable of this death to self, Trop and Prou leave Peu and Moins and are abandoned to their sadness. This is contrasted with the contemplative and carefree life of Peu and Moins. Like *Inquisiteur*, the play thus presents an evangelical theme, here from Matthew 22:14: "many [prou] are called, but few [peu] are chosen." Trop and Prou are not merely representatives of a failing ecclesiastical institution or of humanity closed to the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, they are also the protagonists of a situation in which Peu and Moins have been unable either to convince or to help them. Here there is no explicit preaching, as in *Malade*; nor, as in *Inquisiteur*, is faith made contagious by song (Peu and Moins claim to sing but their song is not heard). This is a non-polemical satire which turns into a meditation. The next play also proposes a reflection without a definitive answer, but in a quite different mode.

Quatre femmes

This 746 line play is surrounded in the 1547 *Marguerites* by poems which are in part its source. The “Epîtres des quatre Dames et des quatre Gentilshommes” lay out in turn the “cases” of eight lovers with analogies to those in *Quatre femmes* (the play retains only the ladies’ cases) and which prefigure several tales in the *Heptaméron*. The long poem *La Coche* (1541) also presents four women and as many love “cases,” for which Marguerite herself acts as judge. *Quatre femmes* similarly uses this structure of investigating parallel and to some extent competing “cases,” integrating it into the context of a carnival mummary which ends with a court ball. To this it adds a complex character, the Vieille, who is joined toward the end of the play by a Vieillard. Turned into a performance leading to a dance, the reflections on the problems of love thus find their solution in the celebration of which they become a part. The four women, two maidens and two married women, each represent a particular social and sentimental condition, whose differences give rise to a discussion. The two maidens, who have life and love ahead of them, disagree on the question of whether one should love. The first one rejects love in the name of liberty,³⁶ the second defends it in the name of life and the heart. Next the two married women appear. Their discussion seeks to determine which of them is more unhappy: the first, unfairly distrusted and ill treated by her husband because she has an honorable *serviteur*, or the second, who is jealous of an unfaithful husband. The two pairs of women meet and are respectively astonished by the sadness and the joy of the other pair. This leads to the third discussion: who is right, those who are happy or those who are distressed? At this point, the Vieille appears, whose role it is to resolve the three discussions underway. She is a complex literary character. Given her hundred years of age, she has in part known the experiences that concern the four women and she represents the past and life-experience. With the Vieillard, she also derives from carnival culture, which differentiates her sharply from the four women who are all young and belong to courtly circles. In carnival rituals, Lent was often depicted by the hideous characters of a Vieille and a Vieux, who must be chased away before the renewal of the year could be celebrated. In fact, in this play, the advice of

³⁶ See the article by Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, “La place de la *Comédie des quatre femmes* de Marguerite de Navarre (1542) dans le discours sur le célibat volontaire comme modèle de félicité d’Aristote à Gabrielle Suchon,” in *Quêtes personnelles et actualités contemporaines*, pp. 113–39.

the Vieille seems less and less trustworthy and is rejected by the young women. Finally, the Vieille has roots too in the second part of the *Roman de la Rose*, where, prefigured by a personification of old age in the first part, there is a character called la Vieille who is also old and repulsive. Whereas she pretends to be an experienced centenarian, she is in fact an old crone. Claiming to advise Bel-Accueil on amorous matters, she preaches a cynical doctrine: "Toutes pour tous, et tous pour toutes."³⁷ Like the character in this play, she too prophesies the future. It is clear that the advice of the Vieille in *Quatre femmes* cannot be accepted by the four courtly ladies: she suggests that they be unfaithful to their husbands and give up their illusions of freedom or of love. So the ladies do not change their respective positions. Each, with her various hopes or expectations, represents an open wager on the future forasmuch as—and this is the first conclusion—God alone knows what the future holds (vv. 702–15). The three discussions, then, remain unresolved, no doubt because any answer would bear the mark of too much confidence or too much despair. Next the Vieillard appears, seemingly desirous of acting as an intermediary between the young women and the Vieille. Four men also appear suddenly (doubtless unmarried young men), who make fun of the Vieillard in conversation with the young women and taunt him by inviting him to take part in the ball about to begin. The Vieillard and the Vieille accept the challenge and everyone dances. In terms of the performance, one can imagine, among other possible scenarios for the mummery, that the Vieille and the Vieillard take off their masks at this point and prove by their willing participation in the ball that what they represented has been eradicated. The ball is, in any case, the point at which all theoretical discussions end, finding a practical answer which favors a joyous and elegant affirmation of life. Along with *Parfaits amants*, *Quatre femmes* is Marguerite's only non-biblical play whose theme is not conversion to the true faith. Rather it is based on discussions of love, even if these are seen in the light of faith in God. Here, her dramaturgy meets courtly life and a strain of literary culture³⁸ and suggests a discrete resistance to the idea that happiness can be fully achieved through human love, thus preparing the way for the open, realistic investigations of the *Heptaméron*.

³⁷ These words are quoted in the discussion following the ninth *nouvelle* of the *Heptaméron*.

³⁸ On the play's lyricism, see Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, "L'expression lyrique de la passion dans la *Comédie des quatre femmes* (1542) de Marguerite de Navarre," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 46 (1998), 25–45.

Comédie sur le trespas du Roy

The death of her brother in March 1547 deeply distressed Marguerite, who expressed her anguish in several poems, one of which is included in this short play of 550 lines. She did so as well in *La Navire*, whose primary theme is the overcoming of grief. If there was ever a performance of this play, clearly it was not in a worldly, celebratory setting, even if *Trépas* figures Marguerite's return to everyday life and her personal embrace of a degree of consolation that signifies an acceptance of life. Directed toward the new king, Henri II, in whose good-will Marguerite was forced to place her hopes, this is also a Christian play reflecting on the legitimacy of mourning (vv. 329ff.) and on the prospect of the afterlife. The queen chose to express her feelings in an autobiographical and allegorical dramatic pastoral, allowing the theater to objectify her inner life. Moreover, there are no doubt allusions to precise historical and personal circumstances that now escape us. In keeping with a long tradition, the shepherds are maskers representing real people around the shepherdess Amarissime (Most Bitter), who stands for the sister of the dead king, here called Pan, as in one of Marot's eclogues.

Amarissime retires to a deserted spot to give herself over fully to her grief; she declares her renunciation of music, all the while singing of her despair. Her friend Securus (Without Care or He Who Dispels Care), in whom we can recognize Marguerite's husband Henri d'Albret, equally saddened, appears and overhears her. He tries to console her, inviting her to follow him home to the Béarn. They sing together and a second shepherd, Agapy (Beloved), who can be identified as Henri II, arrives on a lower part of the stage and hears the voice of Amarissime. He sends her a bird, which he then follows in order to join her, while Amarissime and Securus continue their song. In this play, then, singing is at once a means of expressing private feelings and a medium that reestablishes a relationship with others. They recognize the voice of Agapy, also singing. Securus greets him in their pastoral mountainscape on the upper level. Before they meet, Agapy and Amarissime are each concerned about the effect his or her grief will have on the other but, once together, neither can keep tears from flowing. All three join their voices in song. A new character appears, Paraclèsis, a feminized form of Paraclete, the Holy Spirit or Comforter of the Gospel of John, sent by "le grand pasteur," God. After the support offered by reason and tenderness (Securus), then by friendship and sympathy (Agapy), comes that of faith. The message is clear: Pan is happy in the Elysian Fields and wants those left behind to rejoice. The

other characters agree to this and Amarissime moves apart to exult in her own transformation, which, through the forgetting of herself and charity, unites her with her brother who has entered into eternal life. Paracletis blesses them, emphasizing that faith which is total confidence. The final song, exceptionally in Marguerite's theater, is a biblico-liturgical passage in Latin, Job 2:10 and 1:21, taken from the first nocturn of the first Sunday of September, expressing acceptance of divine providence. The funereal connotations of the citation fade before the strength of thanksgiving. The liturgy, which Marguerite likely followed after the death of her brother in the solitude of the priory of Tusson, marks the conclusion of a pastoral that combines the usual topics (like the simple life of shepherds), the use of alternating song (characteristic of the bucolic), and the reestablishing of communion with the voices of others. We also hear echoes of Marguerite's evangelical faith, as in the expression "foy vive" (v. 150). There is no question of praying for the deceased, but rather of receiving by faith a promise which frees the faithful from any anguish concerning the afterlife.

Mont-de-Marsan

This 1015 line play is known by the name of the place where it was performed in 1548 on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, a day of transition between carnival and Lent. The first part of the play brings together the Mondaine and the Superstitieuse, who personify two opposed vices that were connected in a meaningful way at that point in the year. Lack of religious conviction and superstition were two extremes traditionally opposed to religion's moral virtue, the golden mean. The Mondaine is attached to amorous and worldly adventures (associated with the *jours gras*), whereas the Superstitieuse identifies with the mortifications of Lent. Beyond the context suggested by the calendar, these two opposites are not merely abstract personifications; their confrontation should be understood in the light of contemporary Evangelism. The Superstitieuse embodies the legalistic religion of works—mortifications, the cult of the saints, etc., considered shameful by Erasmian Christian humanism—and the idea of merit, which Protestant Evangelism denounced as an illusion and a source of pride. In the event, each of the women comes to a better understanding of her identity and is converted to a higher truth, represented by a third character, the Sage, who joins the conversation subsequently and embodies the balance of reason. The Sage is in part the mouthpiece for the author's Evangelism, based on personal, direct

knowledge of the Bible in the vernacular—of which, after having enlightened the other two and freed them from their respective errors, the Sage presents them with a copy on stage. Marguerite goes beyond the antithesis between lack of religious conviction and superstition as well as the idea of religion as moral virtue; she identifies religion with faith, seen here as a theological virtue, founded on reason but also, with hope and charity, on powers beyond those of human reason. Faith justifies the believer and is manifest in joy and active charity. In this way, Marguerite stages a position shared by Erasmian humanists and all shades of Evangelicals, including Protestants: a respect for the body subordinated to the soul; resistance to all forms of asceticism whereby one might claim to accomplish one's salvation; a redeeming faith which precedes works and directs them; an interiorized and reasonable Christian life based on the Bible. The Superstitieuse was certainly lacking in joy or love. However, even in her pride, she declares herself humble, as a woman and an untutored person, when she is told to read the Scriptures on her own. This makes her sympathetic. The Mondaine, obsessed by bodily pleasures, is by that very fact closer to God, because of the inclinations toward love and joy by which she is moved. In the first part of the play, Marguerite thus succeeds in rendering complex and nuanced the oppositions she dramatizes by means of these characters, who sometimes sing. The optimism of the script recalls that of *Malade* and *Inquisiteur*.

However, a fourth woman comes on stage singing (v. 573). She is a shepherdess, the Ravie de Dieu. This loving creature seems to embody the ideal of love and joy recommended earlier by the Sage. But there is nothing reasonable in this shepherdess and her ability to communicate is limited to spontaneous outpourings of her interior life. The Sage decides immediately that she must be mad (v. 586). From a literary perspective, the shepherdess sings of a pure and disinterested love in a courtly register; in conformity with the bucolic tradition, she uses simple language, the language of popular song marked by repeated refrains and tunes familiar to the audience. She deals with the other characters only by singing, a common technique in farce. Singing indicates that the shepherdess's identity is inseparable from her intense interior life, she embodies what the Sage preached earlier: faith as a loving relationship between the believer and God, who is never directly named. Reason and love, which were connected in the Sage's discourse, are dissociated here and only love remains for the shepherdess. Since the Sage (the only character who never sings) is incapable of recognizing the true identity of the shepherdess as a fool for Christ, the audience is put in the position of asking, retrospectively, if

the Sage really lives what she preaches. On the other hand, the shepherdess's songs are readily interpreted by Marguerite's audience, familiar with spiritual *contrafacta* of profane love songs and with the mystical tradition that makes human love a parable of divine love—as *Inquisiteur* and *Trop Prou* merely suggested, and *Désert* illustrated.

The remainder of the play consists of disconnected dialogues, misunderstandings, and unsuccessful attempts at explanation. Even when the shepherdess stops singing and starts to speak (vv. 714–882), the others cannot understand the meaning of her words. They are again a celebration of love, sufficient unto itself. Must this be identified, as has been suggested, with the spirituality of the Spiritual Libertines condemned by Calvin?³⁹ It is possible but far from certain. Dramatically, the Ravie de Dieu marks the gulf separating human faculties and the reasonable exercise of virtue, on the one hand, and the absolute authenticity of mystical life, which is unknowable, on the other. The play of incomprehension, repeated from *Trop Prou*, isolates and glorifies the shepherdess to the very end. When the other women have left, placing themselves in God's hands, the ecstasy of the shepherdess becomes the focus, expressed in a mysterious lyricism which imitates the invisible coming of such a state of grace. The play thus moves from wrong living and wrong belief to enlightened evangelical faith and, finally, to the symbolic representation of the spiritual plane. The story might go on, but that would be off-stage (no one is found irremediably guilty). In contrast to the biblical plays, spiritual life here can only speak on the stage as a solitary song that paradoxically becomes the source of dramatic tension and ends in silence.

Parfaits amants

This comedy, a very short play of 186 lines, connected to a real event, was composed when Marguerite's daughter and her husband, Antoine de Bourbon, came to Navarre in 1549. It has elements in common with the romantic, casuistic, and folkloric characteristics of *Quatre femmes*, which the author uses here to reflect on love in a courtly context. In a bucolic setting, a woman has been searching for a thousand years for a perfect lover to whom she might give a crown of flowers, putting an end to her interminable wandering. This quest brings about a discussion, like that of *Quatre femmes*, which develops based on implicit comparisons between the various people the woman meets in turn. First there are three maidens

³⁹ See Saulnier, ed., *Théâtre profane*, pp. 246–66.

who ask for the crown. She refuses to give it to them because love must be tested in various ways to be perfect. The first maiden knows nothing of the torment of absence when her lover is far from her; the second has not experienced the absence of her beloved; the third, who does not have these failings, refuses to imagine that her beloved might love someone else; if he did, she would leave him for another. The woman then sees a man who says that his beloved is worthy of the crown, and the latter in return says the former is the only worthy recipient. The man, called Mars, was doubtless played by a member of the high aristocracy. The woman does not know to which of the two she should give her gift, since each of the lovers refuses to accept it for him- or herself. It would seem that she then turns to the judges of the Court of Love, no doubt the princely couple seated in the audience. They (perhaps Jeanne and Antoine) are charged with deciding between these two perfect lovers, very likely on the occasion of their engagement or their marriage. An evangelical choice of words makes itself felt in the final benediction: God “de lui seul vous donne la connaissance.” In this way, real love is marked by the discrete imprint of the author’s religious spirituality.

* * *

The non-biblical plays are close to the biblical ones, sharing particular thematic accents. For example, the Virgin Mary sheds light on the shepherdess of *Mont-de-Marsan* as an ecstatic, but also, in contrast, as a solitary figure who will not be understood. We have seen as well that five of the seven plays are structured around a story of conversion. On the other hand, there is a progression in the religious message of the non-biblical theater, from the successful evangelical propaganda of *Malade*, *Inquisiteur*, and in part in *Mont-de-Marsan*, to the failures of spiritual communion in the gospel in *Trop Prou* and the end of *Mont-de-Marsan*. This last play represents the religious culmination of Marguerite’s theater. It combines dialogues leading to conversion, as in *Malade* and *Inquisiteur*, and the encounters lacking any decisive interaction found in *Trop Prou*. The shepherdess, who belongs to the bucolic world of human love, as in *Trépas* and *Parfaits amants*, is an avatar of Mary, of the children of *Inquisiteur*, and of *Peu* and *Moins*. Inversely, in the plays intended as courtly entertainment—*Quatre femmes* and *Parfaits amants*—human love, even perfect human love, needs to be enlightened by evangelical faith to reach its fullest expression. All this prefigures, in a different register and according to the conventions of a different literary genre, the themes, situations, and discussions of the *Heptaméron*.

THE *HEPTAMÉRON*: WORD, SPIRIT, WORLD

Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley

The *Heptaméron*, Marguerite de Navarre's best-known and most widely read work today, was not published during the author's lifetime and remained unfinished at her death in 1549. This may leave the modern reader with a sense of irresolution, but it also encourages an engaged yet open-minded approach, that, as we shall see, is appropriate for this rich and complex dialogic text. Historically the plurivocality and secular material of the prose short-story collection encouraged the perception that it stood in opposition to Marguerite's poetic and theatrical compositions, with a few exceptions more uniquely spiritual or mystical in nature.¹ For the most part, critics now agree on the profoundly religious character of the *Heptaméron*.² At the same time, differences remain between the prose work and those in verse, especially in terms of genre and literary form and expression, as well as choice and treatment of subject matter.

¹ In *Amour sacré, amour profane: Autour de "l'Heptaméron"* (Paris, 1944; 1971; 1996), Lucien Febvre argued for the coherence of Marguerite's corpus, noting the presence of "les leçons de sa foi dans des récits profanes" (p. 330). Nevertheless, there remained for Febvre an "incompatibilité psychologique et morale" between the storytellers' "exercices de piété et la teneur des nouvelles"; even worse, the fictional narrators "traitent avec légèreté—tout au moins avec une apparente légèreté—des manquements à notre morale qui nous paraissent graves et répréhensibles" (p. 358). Philippe de Lajarte's illuminating structuralist analyses also posited a separation in Marguerite's œuvre between a "sacred," logocentric discourse and a "secular," nominalist, empirical one; see "*L'Heptaméron* et la naissance du récit moderne: Essai de lecture épistémologique d'un discours narratif," *Littérature* 17 (1975), 31–42 (pp. 34–37), and "Le Prologue de l'*Heptaméron* et le processus de production de l'œuvre," in *La Nouvelle française à la Renaissance*, ed. Lionello Sozzi (Geneva and Paris, 1981), pp. 397–423 (pp. 409–17).

² See, for example, two distinguished contributions to *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptameron and Early Modern Culture*, ed. John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia, 1993): Robert D. Cottrell, "Inmost Cravings: The Logic of Desire in the *Heptameron*," pp. 3–24, and Edwin M. Duval, "'Et puis, quelles nouvelles?': The Project of Marguerite's Unfinished Decameron," pp. 241–62. More generally, see the work of scholars such as Paula Sommers, Gérard Defaux, Jan Miernowski, and the authors of the present essay. Carol Thysell, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford, 2000), reads the *Heptaméron* in relation to the ideas of the Spiritual Libertines, as denounced by Jean Calvin, and Florentine neo-Platonism. Nicolas Le Cadet examines evangelical prose fiction as a category in *L'Évangélisme fictionnel: Les Livres rabelaisiens, le Cymbalum Mundi, L'Heptaméron (1532–1552)* (Paris, 2010).

Genesis

Given the circumstances of the *Heptaméron*'s composition and first publication, it is impossible to establish a single definitive text. The work comes down to us in 19 manuscript copies, nine of which give the whole text, i.e., break off after the second *nouvelle* of the eighth day. Some of the remaining partial manuscripts, notably Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1513, offer precious insights into the early stages of the work's composition and the evolution of Marguerite's creative project. Of the first two printed editions, neither is satisfactory: that of Pierre Boaistuau, published anonymously in 1558 as *Histoire des amans fortunez*, is particularly mangled, but even that of Claude Gruget in 1559, which gives the author's name and first uses the title *L'Heptaméron*, censures many passages, in particular relating to religious issues.³ As a result, all but one of the available modern editions are based on one or another of the complete manuscripts.⁴

The principal model for the *Heptaméron*, acknowledged in the prologue, was the *Decameron* of Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75). Marguerite may have known it in an edition in Italian. The work also existed in a French translation from the early 15th century by Laurent de Premierfait, which she could have read in her youth since a copy was among the manuscripts in the library of her paternal grandfather, Jean d'Orléans, at the castle of Cognac.⁵ In 1485, the Parisian printer Antoine Vérard published a volume said to be the translation by Premierfait but in reality representing a loose rewriting of the text, including, notably, the addition of moral lessons at

³ On the extant manuscripts, the early printed editions, and the evolution of the project of the *nouvelle* collection, see Sylvie Lefèvre, "L'*Heptaméron*: codices et indices," in *Autour du roman: Études présentées à Nicole Cazauran* (Paris, 1990), pp. 69–94; Nicole Cazauran, "Sur l'élaboration de *L'Heptaméron*," in *Variétés pour Marguerite de Navarre, 1978–2004: Autour de "L'Heptaméron"* (Paris, 2005), pp. 143–68; Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, ed. Renja Salminen (Geneva, 1999), pp. xi–lxxxii; Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and Sylvie Lefèvre (Paris, 2000), pp. 49–51 and 604–10.

⁴ Since the 19th-century edition of Le Roux de Lincy, most editions have been based on BnF, fr. 1512, including those of Michel François (Paris, 1967), Simone de Reyff (Paris, 1982), and Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani (Paris, 1999). Yves Le Hir (Grenoble, 1967) follows BnF, fr. 1524; Salminen (ed. cit.) gives the text of BnF, fr. 2155. Cazauran and Lefèvre (ed. cit.) publish the 1559 Gruget edition, but supplemented and corrected from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Hamilton 425 and other sources. This necessitates a system of typographical signs to indicate originally excised and added material. For some of Gruget's suppressions, see below, "Posterity and Religious Polemic." The edition of reference throughout this essay will be that of Mathieu-Castellani, following the most commonly reproduced manuscript.

⁵ See Gustave Dupont-Ferrier, "Jean d'Orléans, comte d'Angoulême, d'après sa bibliothèque (1467)," in *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge*, ed. Achille Luchaire (Université de Paris, Bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres) 3 (Paris, 1897), pp. 39–92, no 17 (p. 59).

the end of each tale. This “version moralisée et mutilée” was issued eight times up to 1541.⁶ Finally, probably in the early 1530s, Marguerite commissioned a new translation from Antoine Le Maçon. Dedicated to her, this was completed and published in 1545.⁷ Marguerite certainly admired Boccaccio, but it is clear, as we shall see below, that her attitude to her model was not without ambivalence.

We do not know the exact date at which Marguerite began writing short stories but the project of gathering 100 tales seems initially to have been a collaborative one envisaged by Marguerite and other members of the French royal court, including the dauphin, the future Henri II. The prologue of the *Heptaméron* describes this royal enterprise, said to have been left unrealized due to personal and state affairs.⁸ Evidence points to the historical veracity of this scenario. Marguerite spent the entire year of 1545 with the court of her brother, François I, in the Loire valley. Initially, she would have been one of ten people telling ten stories each, only later deciding to pursue herself the composition of 100 tales, recounted and discussed by ten fictional characters based loosely on historical members of her circle.⁹ The setting for the new collection's frame story would not be France, however, but Marguerite's own kingdom of Navarre: initially the spa town of Cauterets, which she herself visited a number of times, notably in September 1546; subsequently the nearby abbey of Premonstratensian canons, Notre-Dame-de-Serrance (modern-day Sarrance), a noted pilgrimage place on the road to Santiago de Compostela.¹⁰

⁶ The expression is Nora Viet's, “*Caméron, Décaméron, Heptaméron*: la genèse de l'*Heptaméron* au miroir des traductions françaises de Boccace,” *Seizième Siècle* 8 (2012), 287–302 (p. 290). See also Mireille Huchon, “Définition et description: le projet de l'*Heptaméron* entre le *Caméron* et le *Décaméron*,” in *Les Visages et les voix de Marguerite de Navarre: Actes du Colloque international sur Marguerite de Navarre (Duke University), 10–11 avril 1992*, ed. Marcel Tetel (Paris, 1995), pp. 51–65.

⁷ *Le Decameron de Messire Jehan Bocace*, trans. Antoine Le Maçon (Paris, Estienne Roffet).

⁸ *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Mathieu-Castellani, pp. 89–90.

⁹ See Salminen, ed. cit., pp. xxxiv–xlix, and Cazauran, “Sur l'élaboration.” Salminen reviews the hypotheses of critics who propose earlier dates (ed. cit., pp. xli–xlii). BnF, fr. 1513 gives 28 tales, of which the first ten appear to be those that Marguerite herself would have told. On the possible historical models for the *Heptaméron*'s storytellers (*devisants* in French), see Salminen, ed. cit., pp. 672–73. It must be stressed, however, that all the storytellers are fictional creations, so that none of them and all of them in some sense can be seen as representing the author.

¹⁰ According to Salminen, Marguerite visited Cauterets in September 1546 and May 1549 (ed. cit., p. 671). Rosanna Gorris Camos refers to additional visits in 1541, 1547, and perhaps 1548; see “‘Ses montz trez [*sic*] haultz haulsent notre desir’: Marguerite de Navarre, Peletier du Mans poètes de la montagne,” in *Nature et paysages: L'Émergence d'une nouvelle*

Prologue

Marguerite reveals explicitly in the prologue that her model text is Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The prologue also suggests, however, that the relationship between the two works is complex and ambiguous. The Renaissance practice of imitating literary models was by its nature an ambivalent process, involving some degree of rivalry and antagonism as well as admiration and deference; it was a process of emulation—a striving to equal, but also to surpass: to outdo, to update, or to revise.¹¹ This attitude, which characterized the relationship of Renaissance writers to Greek and Latin literature, was also typical of French writers toward Italian literary productions, since Italy was the place recognized as having been the first to produce its own great “classical” works in the vernacular. In the case of the *Heptaméron* and the *Decameron*, the imitative/emulative relationship is played out in a way that is particularly complex, suggesting both Marguerite's admiration and her desire to differentiate her work from her model. In addition, Marguerite likely knew Boccaccio's text in different forms: after 1545, in Le Maçon's translation, all or parts of which she might also have read earlier in manuscript; before the mid-1540s, in the original Italian and/or in the translation of Premierfait and the moralized rewriting published by Vérard.¹²

In the *Heptaméron*'s prologue the storytellers refer explicitly to the new Le Maçon translation. This is said to have excited the enthusiasm of the French court to such a degree that various members of the royal family decided to assemble their own collection of stories, but to do so with an important difference, that is, “de n'escrire nulle nouvelle qui ne soit veritable histoire” (p. 90). The dauphin had insisted on the exclusion of “ceulx qui avoient estudié et estoient gens de lettres... de paour que la beaulté de la rethoricque fait tort en quelque partye à la verité de l'histoire” (ibid.). It is this “truthful” French project that the *Heptaméron*'s

subjectivité à la Renaissance, Actes des journées d'étude organisées par l'École nationale des chartes (26 mars 2004 et 15 avril 2005), ed. Dominique de Courcelles with Jean-Pierre Bat (Paris, 2006), pp. 151–77 (p. 158).

¹¹ See the now classic study of Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London, 1982). See also Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford, 1979) and the more recent contribution of JoAnn DellaNeva, *Unlikely Exemplars: Reading and Imitating Beyond the Italian Canon in French Renaissance Poetry* (Newark, Del., 2009).

¹² Mireille Huchon first suggested that Marguerite's *nouvelle* project probably developed in dialogue with both Vérard's *Cent nouvelles* and a more accurate version of the *Decameron* (“Définition,” p. 60); cf. Viet, “*Caméron*.”

storytellers adopt at the suggestion of Parlamente. It is the case that many of the stories told by the *devisants* are based on historical events. Nevertheless, this must not lead us to underestimate the literary and fictional nature of Marguerite's work. Not only the dialogues are invented by the author, but the *nouvelles* themselves are crafted into pieces of short narrative prose. At times, indeed, Marguerite has recourse to earlier, even traditional, fictional material, that, after adding a sprinkling of names of people and places, she passes off as an account of recent events.¹³ The claim of truthfulness is a topos of the French *nouvelle* collection that must be understood as being deployed self-consciously; at the same time, the *Heptaméron* certainly does set out to deal with issues of truth—social, moral, and religious.¹⁴ In this light, the prologue ends on a deliciously ironical and playful note, one that raises again and leaves open the question of (plain French) truth and (Boccaccian) rhetoric, when the meadow in which the storytellers assemble is described by the frame-narrator as “si beau et plaisant qu'il avoit besoin d'un Bocace pour le depaindre à la verité; mais vous [vous] contenterez que jamais n'en feut veu ung plus beau” (p. 92, our italics).

In addition to these explicit intertextual engagements, numerous echoes between Marguerite's and Boccaccio's frame stories set in play a complex series of similarities and differences between the two works that can be read as indicative of differences in authorial intention.¹⁵ The *Decameron's*

¹³ Among critics who emphasize the documentary quality of the *nouvelles*, see, notably, Gabriel-A. Pérouse, *Nouvelles françaises du XVI^e siècle: Images de la vie du temps* (Geneva, 1977). See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987) for archival precedents. More recently, critics have also sought to highlight the fictive aspects of the *nouvelles* and so to balance depiction of historical reality with imaginary creation: see the introduction and conclusion to *Critical Tales*, ed. Lyons and McKinley; see also Gary Ferguson and David LaGuardia, eds., *Narrative Worlds: Essays on the Nouvelle in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France* (Tempe, Ariz., 2005), where the contributions of the two editors examine, respectively, the transformation of a historical event into a story in *nouvelle* 12 (pp. 97–122) and the reworking of material from the medieval traditions of the fabliau and the *exemplum* in *nouvelle* 6 (pp. 139–58).

¹⁴ On the question of “truth claims” in the *nouvelle* collections, see Emily Thompson, “‘Une merveilleuse espee d'animal’: Fable and Verisimilitude in Bonaventure des Périers's *Nouvelles récréations et joyeux devis*,” in *Narrative Worlds*, ed. Ferguson and LaGuardia, pp. 17–33.

¹⁵ On the prologue, see in particular: Yves Delègue, “Autour de deux prologues: l'*Heptaméron* est-il un anti-Boccace?,” *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature* 4.2 (1966), 23–37; Claude-Gilbert Dubois, “Fonds mythique et jeu des sens dans le ‘Prologue’ de l'*Heptaméron*,” in *Études seiziémistes offertes à Monsieur le Professeur V. L. Saulnier par plusieurs de ses anciens doctorants* (Geneva, 1980), pp. 151–68; Elizabeth C. Wright, “Marguerite Reads Giovanni: Gender and Narration in the *Heptaméron* and the *Decameron*,” *Renaissance*

prologue famously describes the effects of the Black Death that descended on the city of Florence in 1348, decimating the population and throwing social life into chaos. The horrific suffering brought by the plague, it is suggested, results from divine anger, since it was “per operazion de’ corpi superiori o per le nostre inique opere da giusta ira di Dio a nostra correzione mandata sopra i mortali.”¹⁶ The *Decameron*’s narrators meet initially in a church (Santa Maria Novella), before fleeing to the safety of a country villa, where, when not telling stories, they pass their time in feasting, dancing, and singing love songs. In the *Heptaméron*, the narrative impetus comes also from an extreme natural phenomenon, but a flood rather than a plague. Heavy rain in September—the month of Marguerite’s own visit to Caudebec in 1546 and in which she situates the prologue—is not an unexpected climatic occurrence. Flooding is a regular part of the natural order, albeit a menacing one that threatens those whom it takes by surprise. The frame-narrator stresses the ways in which divine providence works to rescue the ten aristocratic storytellers from this initial danger and subsequent ones—including attacks by bandits and wild animals—in order to bring them together to safety, even if Longarine’s husband is killed and they collectively suffer the loss of most or all of their servants and animals.¹⁷ The action thus takes the narrators from a spa town, where they were seeking relief from physical ailments in the curative properties of water, through a torrential downpour, to a monastery which offers them refuge. The *devisants* are all grateful for their deliverance and begin each day by listening to expositions of Holy Scripture and later attending

and *Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 15 (1991), 21–36; Paula Sommers, “Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*: The Case for the Cornice,” *The French Review* 57 (1984), 786–93; Nicole Cazauran, “L’*Heptaméron* face au *Décameron*,” in *Variétés*, pp. 175–212; Glyn Norton, “Narrative Function in the *Heptaméron* Frame Story,” in *La Nouvelle française*, ed. Sozzi, pp. 435–47; Gorris Camos, “‘Ses montz...’”

¹⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca (Milan, 1985), p. 12: “through the operation of the heavenly bodies or of our own iniquitous doings, . . . sent down upon mankind for our correction by the just wrath of God,” trans. John Payne, rev. and annotated Charles S. Singleton, 3 vols. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1982), 1:8.

¹⁷ The eight storytellers gathered initially at the abbey of Saint-Savin, on receiving news of Oisille and Simontault, praise God, who, “en se contentant des serviteurs, avoit saulé les maîtres et maîtresses” (p. 84); cf. the remarks of Ennasuite (p. 86). The elitist perspective betrayed here by the aristocratic *devisants* has frequently been noted. For a discussion of the representation of divine providence in the prologue, see Thysell, *The Pleasure*, pp. 68–78. Thysell’s analysis is mistaken, however, in seeing the assembled storytellers as a socially mixed group, in which servants are given equal voice with masters (pp. 93–94 and 96). The *serviteurs* among the *devisants* are not domestic servants but gentlemen devoted to a particular lady.

Mass and vespers. Unlike their Florentine forebears, they give themselves to the singing not of love songs but of psalms and canticles. Whereas the narrative in the *Decameron* moves from sacred to secular, then, the *Heptaméron* sets up an inverse movement from secular to sacred—from a locus dedicated to the health of the body to a place intended to promote health of the soul.

Mountains and water are natural phenomena that also carry strong symbolic associations, particularly in a biblical framework. Mountains are often places of retreat, of contemplation, of epiphany or theophany.¹⁸ Water and flood recall primarily the story of Noah (Gen. 6:5–9:17)—a story of God's just judgment but also his mercy toward his creation, to which the frame-narrator alludes overtly: “sur le temps de ce retour vindrent les pluies si merveilleuses et si grandes, qu'il sembloit que Dieu eut oblyé la promesse qu'il avoit faicte à Noé de ne destruire plus le monde par eaeu” (pp. 77–78).¹⁹ As we shall discuss further below, the question of judgment—that of God and that of humans, of oneself and of others—is a central issue that recurs throughout the *Heptaméron*. In a typological or allegorical frame, the reader is directed toward the idea of the individual's incorporation into the Church through the waters of baptism and of Christ bringing the elect with him through the waters of death to salvation.

The first *devisant* we meet is Oisille, the oldest and most devout of the group, as she decides to make her way to Notre-Dame-de-Serrance: “Non qu'elle fust si supersticieuse qu'elle pensast que la glorieuse Vierge laissast la dextre de son filz où elle est assise pour venir demorer en terre deserte, mais seulement pour envye de veoir le devot lieu dont elle avoit tant oy parler” (p. 79). The frame-narrator's words are revealing here. There is no questioning of the belief that the Virgin Mary is in heaven, seated at her Son's right hand, no questioning, that is, of the Catholic doctrine of the Assumption. Nor is there any doubting of the religious character of the site. What would seem to make the place holy, however, is the outpouring of faith and piety on the part of the innumerable pilgrims who visit—pilgrims like the old monk who returns every year for the church's major celebration on 8 September, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, and who helps Simontault find his way to safety there (pp. 83–84). The legend

¹⁸ See Gorris Camos, “Ses montz . . .”

¹⁹ On the thematics of memory and forgetting in the *Heptaméron* and other works by Marguerite, see Nicolas Russell, *Transformations of Memory and Forgetting in Sixteenth-Century France: Marguerite de Navarre, Pierre de Ronsard, Michel de Montaigne* (Newark, Del., 2011).

attached to the shrine, however, told how a shepherd and a man fishing for trout discovered a statue of the Virgin Mary in one of the springs of the *gave Béarnais* (*gave de Pau*) by following a bull that went regularly to kneel before it in homage. When the statue was taken by the bishop to the cathedral in Oloron, it miraculously returned to the place it had been found, after which a chapel was built there to house it.²⁰ If this story might suggest that the Virgin had chosen to establish a special presence in Serrance, then Oisille would seem to consider it a mere superstition. The description of her motivation in heading toward the abbey carries a sting in its tail, moreover, since we learn that Oisille is also certain that if any means of escape from danger exists, monks can be relied upon to find it. This humorous but pointed jibe at the self-interest of those in religious orders prefigures another major theme of the *Heptaméron*: its anticlericalism (see below). Likewise, while the monastic community offers the *devisants* a welcome shelter, it does not constitute a spiritual utopia: its abbot is described as avaricious and dissembling, and the monks are not models of devotion.²¹

When the prospect of waiting for ten days as the bridge is rebuilt casts a fear of *ennui* on the stranded travelers, Bible reading and prayerfully attending Mass each morning are Oisille's suggestions for how the group might pass its time "joyfully" (pp. 87–88). As Hircan points out, however, they are not all sufficiently "mortified" (that is, dead to self and to sin) to make this their sole activity and he suggests a more carnal exercise.²² His wife Parlamente, catching his innuendo, replies: "mais laissons là les passetemps où deux seulement peuvent avoir part et parlons de celluy qui doit estre commun à tous" (p. 89). They therefore decide to give their afternoons to the collective project of telling and discussing stories. At the same time, the company accepts Oisille's suggestion and gathers early each morning in her room to hear her read and expound a passage from the Bible. While the frame story of the *Heptaméron* thus echoes the

²⁰ See <<http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/ehm/Sarrance/180563>>, viewed on 12 July 2012.

²¹ In light of the long clerical tradition of using *exempla* in preaching, John D. Lyons points out the significance of the inversion operated in the *Heptaméron* whereby lay people recount exemplary tales, frequently involving the misdeeds of clerics, while some of the monks listen surreptitiously; see *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 106–07. The abbot and monks of the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Savin are described briefly but in generally positive terms.

²² The preferred reading is "nous ne sommes encores sy mortifiez," ed. Salminen, p. 10; cf. ed. Cazauran and Lefèvre, p. 64.

Decameron, the moral situation of the French work is very different from that of its Italian model. From the outset, the *Heptaméron* reflects clearly the author's religious and more particularly evangelical convictions, which subsequently inform both the stories themselves and the discussions of the *devisants*.

An Evangelical Community

The travelers stranded in the flood-ravaged mountains of the Pyrenees come together to form a community. Marguerite's word in the prologue for that newly formed group is *assemblée* (p. 92). As Edwin Duval has remarked, this is the meaning of the Greek word *ekklesia* in the New Testament, the word that became *église* in French.²³ Marguerite created ten characters who reflect the diversity in the aristocratic society she knew, men and women who bring different personalities to the group. In their stories and discussions, they debate issues central to the Reformation: the role of faith and good works; the effects of sin and the paths to reconciliation with God; the folly of human presumption; religious rituals that might become superstitions; the perils of austerity; and, perhaps most compellingly, the place of love, human and divine, in the world and in the scheme of salvation. Although they disagree about many aspects of their society's norms, no one challenges a broadly evangelical position on theological issues. When they need to find a way to live together through their interlude at Serrance, they turn first to the widow Oisille, rather than to one of the monks hosting them. Oisille represents a more active and joyful version of the ideal of the Christian widow described by Saint Paul (1 Tim. 5:3–10) and elaborated by contemporary humanists such as Juan Luis Vives.²⁴ If the group adopts Parmenté's suggestion to tell stories in the afternoon, they also follow Oisille's counsel and go to hear her scriptural reading and commentary in the morning. Lefèvre d'Étaples and the group at Meaux regarded the biblical examples of Christ's first followers

²³ Duval, "Et puis, quelles nouvelles?"

²⁴ In "Feminine Authority in the *Heptameron*: A Reading of Oysille," *Modern Language Studies* 13.2 (1983), 52–59, Paula Sommers points out that Oisille is "a woman who combines in an unusually positive synthesis traits which were regarded as negative in the satiric literature of the 'querelle des femmes'—age, femininity and authority" (p. 52). Sommers adds: "Oysille has left the cloistered environment judged suitable for the widow and ventures into the world. She also enjoys the pageant of life around her and combines deep piety with a sense of humor" (p. 55).

as a model for Church reform. The ten *devisants* might recall the early disciples in the New Testament Epistles and Acts of the Apostles, the books they read together.

The modern reader may well miss the radical nature of this situation. First, for the Catholic Church, the function of explicating and teaching Holy Scripture was reserved strictly to clerics. Here it is assumed not only by a layperson, but by a woman, who, by virtue of her sex, would have been excluded from the clergy and from university studies. Saint Paul famously forbade women to speak in church or to teach men (1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–12); Marguerite does not seem to have considered this a prohibition against women teaching in other places. None of the *devisants* expresses any hesitation in accepting Oisille's spiritual guidance. Second, the reader is never told which version of the Bible Oisille uses for her commentaries, but it might be supposed to be a French version, like that published by Lefèvre d'Étaples (New Testament, 1523; Old Testament, 1528; Complete Bible, 1530).²⁵ The Catholic Church, whose official Bible was the Latin Vulgate, had never been enthusiastic about vernacular translations, which put the sacred texts into the hands of any literate person. As reform movements proliferated in the 16th century, Catholic authorities became more and more hostile to vernacular Bibles. Even when such translations were based on the Vulgate, as was the case with Lefèvre's, preparing, printing, selling, or owning one, could leave an individual open to suspicion of heresy. In this way, the religious activities of the *Heptaméron's* *devisants* clearly reflect their evangelical sympathies. The Word of God is fundamental, as many who wanted to reform the Catholic Church insisted, but Oisille's biblical lessons are always followed by attending Mass, the central Catholic liturgical rite, believed to effect the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a doctrine Calvin and other reformers rejected.²⁶ The *devisants* might become so involved in the biblical lesson that they risk being late for the liturgy, but when one of the

²⁵ Nicole Cazauban examines the biblical quotations and paraphrases in the *Heptaméron* to show that these echo both Lefèvre's French Bible and the Latin text of the Vulgate, which Marguerite would have heard throughout her life in the context of the liturgy. Occasional phrases even figure in Latin. See "Le langage 'biblien' des *devisants* de *L'Heptaméron*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 70 (2008), 281–99. On the *devisants'* appeals to Scripture, see idem, "Les citations bibliques dans *L'Heptaméron*," in *Variétés*, pp. 379–91.

²⁶ See B. A. Gerrish's entry "Eucharist" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans Hillerbrand, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1995), 2:71–81. The Catholic Mass was the target of the inflammatory placards posted widely in France on the night of 18 October 1534. See the introduction to this volume.

religious calls them, they emerge from their “contemplation” and hear Mass “bien devotement” (p. 299).

The Bonds of Sin—Clerics, Cordeliers, “Cuyder”

The current state of the Church is in fact a central issue in the *Heptaméron*, which dwells insistently on the abusive behavior of the clergy.²⁷ This subject might be considered apt material for short stories and had fed a long tradition of satirical anticlerical writing throughout the Middle Ages. Nonetheless, its treatment in the *Heptaméron* is notable in several respects. Here, as in other areas, Marguerite avoids absolute generalizations. Not all of the tales’ priests and religious are wicked; nevertheless, the vast majority of them are, and the topic concerns no less than 24—fully one third—of the 72 stories. If we look at the first ten stories composed by the queen—those that she herself would apparently have told as part of the French court’s unrealized project of imitating the *Decameron*—half of them are anticlerical in nature and represent some of the most violent in the collection (*nouvelles* 23, 22, 31, 33, and 34). In their discussions, the *devisants* are also severe in their indictment of the clergy and in particular of *cordeliers* or Franciscan friars.

Satire of clerical abuses not only formed part of a long tradition of anticlerical writing within the Catholic Church, it was also a major theme within Reformed and Protestant attacks against Rome. How does Marguerite fit into this picture? We shall return shortly to the particular moral failings of which the clergy is accused; first, however, it is important to note that the principal charge brought against certain representatives of the Catholic Church is that the doctrine they expound is false. One of the most vivid examples of this is offered by *nouvelle* 23, which tells of a woman raped by a *cordelier*. If the latter acts out of lust, the erroneous theology preached by members of his order is presented by the narrator Oisille as the direct cause of the tragic outcome. The woman takes her own life and inadvertently provokes the death of her baby in her ignorance of God’s forgiveness, given freely to sinners, and having learned only

²⁷ In relation to the issues discussed in this section, see the following articles by Gary Ferguson: “Mal vivre, mal croire: l’anticlérisme de l’*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Seizième Siècle* 6 (2010), 151–63; “All in Knots: Teaching the *Heptameron* with *Les Prisons*,” in *Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptameron*, ed. Colette H. Winn (New York, 2007), pp. 135–40; “Péchés capitaux et ‘vices italiens’: l’avarice et ses complices dans l’*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Seizième Siècle* 4 (2008), 73–87.

"la confiance des bonnes œuvres, la satisfaction des péchez par austerité de vie, jeusnes et disciplines" (p. 348). Such a works-centered teaching, for Oisille, is nothing less than a theology of despair and death. A second example is found in the discussion following *nouvelle* 55. The topic here is the practice of making a bequest to a religious foundation, and in particular to Franciscans who promise to secure admittance into heaven for those who leave them money in their will. Such claims are qualified by the *devisants* as outright deceptions since they suggest that God himself might be bought. Hircan concludes: "Je vous declare que je ne pense point qu'il y ayt au monde plus grands mensonges que les leurs" (p. 578). It is not in and of itself the practice of making a donation to the friars that is at issue here; it is the idea that such a "good work," irrespective of other factors, might be sufficient to secure a person's salvation.

It is no doubt to move beyond a simple criticism of clerical morals that the *Heptaméron's* stories frequently concern priests and religious who initially seem to lead a life of exemplary piety; it is these apparently virtuous men who subsequently commit the most heinous of crimes. *Nouvelle* 22 describes the case of the prieur de Saint-Martin, who, after living austerely up to the age of 50 and being known for his reforming zeal, becomes the pitiless persecutor of a nun who refuses to acquiesce to his sexual demands (cf. *nouvelles* 56 and 72). In each case, however, the *Heptaméron* stresses that the individuals in question are considered devout because of the pious deeds they are seen to perform. These works of piety, the reader is repeatedly shown, can turn out to be deceptive. It is necessary for the Christian to live well, and against the friars in tale 5 who try to rape a ferrywoman, the villagers recall the New Testament dictum that a tree is known by its fruits (p. 130; cf. Matt. 12:33, Luke 6:43–44). This does not mean, however, that holiness lies in the performance of works. Those who put their trust in their own efforts rather than in God's mercy will, sooner or later, fall; for all humans are weak and sinful and stand in constant need of grace. This is the truth that, for Marguerite and her *devisants*, the teaching of many clerics serves to obscure.

In the 16th century, many moderate reforming Catholics, following the lead of Erasmus, decried the disordered life of the clergy, since it lead the faithful into doctrinal error.²⁸ This was the position of Bishop

²⁸ See Thierry Wanegffelen, *Une difficile fidélité: Catholiques malgré le concile en France, XVI^e–XVII^e siècles* (Paris, 1999), pp. 40–41.

Guillaume Briçonnet, who, writing to the queen in December 1521, described the shortcomings of the Church's pastors as follows:

L'Eglise est de present aride et sèche comme le torrent en la grand chaleur australe. La challeur d'avarice, ambicion et voluptueuse vie a deseché son eau de vie, doctrine et exemplarité. . . . Ung chacun serche son prouffict et honneur. Il n'est plus question de celuy de Dieu.²⁹

The position expressed in the *Heptaméron* is more radical than this. While there is no denial of the value of the religious life or of the role of priests and of the sacraments, the problem, for Marguerite, seems to be the inverse of that described by Briçonnet: it is the wrong doctrine of many priests and religious that leads them—and frequently those in their charge—into sin. Their lives are not holy, even if for a time they might appear to be so, because they are founded on a faith that is false.

Why, then, does the *Heptaméron* direct its satire so forcefully against the *cordeliers*? Marguerite and her brother had been involved in the reform of this order, one of the most numerous and active in France.³⁰ In 1521, for example, François I had forced all Franciscan convents to join the order's Observant branch. Since the *cordeliers* did not live an enclosed contemplative life but exercised an active ministry, often in an urban setting, they mixed with the population in ways that might place them in situations of perceived or real temptation, demanding a level of self-control not all of them possessed. The principal reason that the *Heptaméron* focuses its anticlerical satire on the *cordeliers*, however, seems to be rather of an imaginary or symbolic nature. In order to explore this thesis, we turn to a consideration of the particular sins imputed to the clergy in general.

It is perhaps not surprising that these are first and foremost of a sexual character (cf. *nouvelles* 1, 5, 22, 23, 29, 31, 33, 41, 46, 48, 60, 61, and 72). Clerics are also frequently accused of avarice (*nouvelles* 44, 55, 56, and 65). This pair of vices is accompanied by a third failing, that is not so much a part of traditional satire, and that consists in a prideful self-sufficiency, a tendency to believe that one is better than others or to trust in one's own merits. This is the sin that both results from and feeds a theology and a devotional life founded on the performance of works that Marguerite

²⁹ Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521–1524)*, ed. Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière, with Henry Heller, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1975–79), 1:85.

³⁰ On the historical context of religious life in 16th-century France, see Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Les Moines au temps des Réformes, France (1480–1560)* (Seyssel, 2001).

considers pernicious. Thus the ageing prieur de Saint-Martin, referred to earlier,

s'estimant luy-mesme le bien public de toute religion, desira de conserver sa santé mieulx qu'il n'avoit accoustumé. Et, combien que sa reigle portast de jamais ne manger chair, il s'en dispensa luy-mesmes, ce qu'il ne faisoit à nul autre, disant que sur luy estoit tout le faiz de la religion. (p. 327)

In *nouvelle* 48, Ennasuite recounts the tale of a Franciscan who takes the place of a husband in the bed of his new bride. In introducing her story, the narrator describes the friars as "ceulx qui nous appellent *mondains* et qui s'estiment estre quelque chose sainte et plus digne que nous" (p. 529); she concludes: "Ne vous esbahissez point . . . si telles gens separez de nostre commune façon de vivre font des choses que les advan-turiers auroient honte de faire. Mais esmerveillez-vous qu'ilz ne font pis quant Dieu retire sa main d'eulx, car l'abit est si loing de faire le moyne, que bien souvent par orgueil il le deffaict" (p. 532). Pride—what Marguerite in her poems calls *cuyder*—is thus the deadliest clerical sin, the root of the theology of self-sufficiency that the *cordeliers* transmit to those who will listen to them—like the wife in *nouvelle* 23 or like the foolish women, described later by Parlemente, whom the friars dupe into giving them money and into trusting in their own works and those of their spiritual guides (p. 511).³¹

This trio of vices—avarice, lust, and pride—is highly significant. First of all, we can see that it represents the exact antithesis of the three religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (this last quality intended to teach humility and combat pride). Second, not only are the *cordeliers* in the *Heptaméron* characterized by a life in direct opposition to their

³¹ Many critics have commented on the importance of *cuyder* in the *Heptaméron*. As Thysell notes, however, it never figures as a noun, as in Marguerite's poetry, but only as a verb. Thysell sees in this a desire on the queen's part to distance herself from the concept associated with the term that Calvin had attributed to the Spiritual Libertines (*The Pleasure*, pp. 48–57). The problem is that Marguerite does not avoid the noun in contemporary poems, such as *Les Prisons*, so that its absence in nominal form from the *Heptaméron* must have other explanations, for example, related to the different genres of the works. The suggestion that the *cordeliers* collectively might represent the *libertins spirituels* is also unconvincing (*ibid.*, p. 54). Le Gall proposes that one of the reasons Marguerite might have focused her attack on the Franciscans is that they were in reality one of the most reformed orders at the time and this could encourage a feeling of superiority and complacency on their part (*Les Moines*, pp. 547–87). To the extent that this was the case, Marguerite would certainly have recognized that reform, like all things, might have its dangers. On the other hand, she herself promoted monastic reform and the *cordeliers* in the *Heptaméron* can hardly be said in general to be portrayed as particularly zealous.

rule, the members of this order advertise visibly the vows they have taken through the three symbolic knots tied in their distinctive rope belt (from which their common name in French derives). This consideration explains in no small part their ubiquity in the *Heptaméron*, in which a number of stories that concern the value of human works and sin and its forgiveness are structured around plays on the semes *corde*/(*dé*)*lier*. Story 23, for example, is told by Oisille to expose “l’ypocrisie de ceulx qui s’estiment plus religieux que les autres” (p. 341). The woman who takes her life after being tricked into sleeping with the *cordelier* does so in her ignorance of God’s “*misericorde*” by strangling herself with a “*corde de son lic*” (p. 348). *Nouvelle* 41, discussed further below, associates in striking fashion the lust of a Franciscan and the penance he imposes on a young woman as a condition for the forgiveness of her sins when he requires her to “porter ma *corde* sur vostre chair toute nue” (p. 484). The girl agrees until the *cordelier* insists that he must tie the cord himself. Finally called to account, he is sent back to his convent “pieds et mains *lyez*” (p. 485; cf. *nouvelle* 56, p. 584). Such exploitation of the thematics of cords/ropes and knots was not without literary precedent and we find examples of similar word play—with both positive and negative meanings—in the work of the 13th-century poet Rutebeuf.³² In the *Heptaméron*, however, it is particularly developed.

The *Heptaméron*’s *cordeliers* are thus bound by sins that are the very antithesis of the vows by which they profess to live. At the same time, like the Pharisees in the gospels, they consider themselves holier than others, for whom “they tie up (Vulgate: *alligant*) heavy burdens, hard to bear.”³³ Their theology of works is a theology of *cuyder*, of despair and death. There is one positive example that confirms the negative picture painted thus far. The two lovers of *nouvelle* 19, forbidden from marrying, turn their thwarted desire to spiritual advantage by becoming Franciscans. The man states specifically, however, that he knows that the religious state is not inherently superior to any other; he merely seeks leisure to reflect upon God’s goodness and mercy (p. 280). He composes a *chanson spirituelle*,

³² In “Li Diz de Freire Denize le Cordelier,” a woman berates a friar: “Qui vos pendroit a votre corde / Qui est en tant de leuz noee / Il auroit fait bone jornee,” vv. 246–48, in Rutebeuf, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. and trans. Michel Zink (Paris, 2001), p. 434. In “Li Diz des Cordeliers,” similar semes are activated in eulogy, but might easily be turned to irony (*ibid.*, p. 52).

³³ Matt. 23:4. Quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

addressed to his beloved, in which he celebrates leaving behind “les biens / Qui sont liens,” “la gloire”/“orgueil,” and “la concupiscence” (p. 285).

The denunciation of vices that are the very opposite of the qualities embodied by religious vows is neither a recent nor an isolated element in Marguerite’s thought—and ultimately it concerns not only *cordeliers* and clerics but all men and women. Briçonnet had repeatedly evoked the same trio of sins, as in his lament, quoted above, over the dryness of the Church due to “[l]a challeur d’avarice, ambicion et voluptueuse vie.”³⁴ In retreat at the priory of Tusson following the death of her brother, Marguerite meditated on the same three sins in writing *Les Prisons*, a poem in which *corde(s)* and *lien(s)* are also among the most recurrent figures of the allegory.³⁵

We began our discussion of clerical *cuyder* with *nouvelle* 23 and the lethal works-centered theology of the *cordeliers* that causes the death of a noblewoman and her child. The stories of the third day build up inexorably to this bleak tale. After *nouvelle* 21, Simontault asserts that “pour faire conclusion du cueur de l’homme et de la femme, le meilleur des deux n’en vault *riens*” (p. 325). Next follows the story of the prieur de Saint-Martin. This is alleged initially by Geburon as an example of the fact that an individual goes astray as soon as he begins to attribute any goodness to himself (pp. 325–26). In conclusion, Geburon will draw the moral that is fundamental to Marguerite’s thought, one based on the teaching of Saint Paul (1 Cor. 1:27–29): “Dieu par les choses foybles confond les fortes, et, par les inutilles aux oeilz des hommes, la gloire de ceulx qui *cuydent* estre *quelque chose* et ne sont *rien*” (pp. 339–40).

The same message of humility lies also at the heart of the *Heptaméron*’s portrayal of women’s relationships with the clergy. Again Marguerite avoids absolute generalizations, recognizing the diversity of human behavior. In this way it is given to the male *devisant* Simontault (not without personal polemical motivation) to tell the very first tale, concerning a wife who has simultaneous extraconjugal liaisons with a bishop and a young man, the first for reasons of profit (avarice), the second for her pleasure (lust) (p. 94). Nonetheless, in the vast majority of cases it is women who are the primary victims of abusive clerics—either because they are most susceptible to giving credence to their teaching, to falling into a reliance on

³⁴ For another example involving “luxure,” “avarice,” and “orgueil,” see *Correspondance*, 2:270.

³⁵ Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva, 1978), pp. 75–77, 80–81, 113–14, 125–26, 136, 150, 187–88.

good works and in particular to making them gifts of money, or because they are the object of clerical sexual predation. On the other hand, it is sometimes women who are able to effect the most successful resistance to unscrupulous priests and religious. One example is the crafty widow in tale 55; there is also the ferrywoman of *nouvelle* 5, who escapes from the clutches of two Franciscans determined to rape her. The woman tricks them by pretending to agree to satisfy each of them in turn, only to leave both stranded in the middle of the river on different islands. When we consider that the boat is a traditional metaphor for the Church, the ejection of the two friars takes on a particularly trenchant symbolic significance.

In a number of *nouvelles*, Marguerite portrays herself as a fictional character coming to the aid of another woman. This is the case in *nouvelle* 22, where she helps the nun Marie Héroët and punishes the prieur de Saint-Martin, in whom up to that point she had had complete confidence. In this way, she shows herself learning the lesson that appearances can be deceptive, that all creatures are fallible, and that we must put our trust in the Creator alone (pp. 338–39). Finally, at the end of story 72, Marguerite makes an appearance in order to succor a young nun in distress after having let herself be seduced by a male religious and become pregnant. It is the duchess of Alençon who takes the steps necessary to have the nun reintegrated into her community and the brother removed. She also convinces the nun to abandon the idea of an unnecessary pilgrimage to Rome to confess her sin to the pope in person.³⁶

In other tales, too, women exercise what can only be termed a religious ministry, paralleling that of Oisille in the frame story. *Nouvelle* 67 shows a woman accompanying her husband on the expedition of Captain Roberval to Canada in 1542. When her spouse is condemned to death for treason, she pleads successfully for them both to be abandoned on an uninhabited island. The woman, “qui avoit toute consolation en Dieu, porta pour sa sauve garde, norriture et consolation, le Nouveau Testament, le quel elle lisoit incessamment” (p. 646). Her husband dies, “n’ayant service ne consolation que de sa femme, laquelle le servoit de medecin et de confesseur; en sorte qu’il passa joieusement de ce desert en la celeste patrie” (ibid.). This is clearly a case of necessity, but everything in the story points to the efficacy of this faithful wife’s ministry to her husband, which is the subject

³⁶ On Marguerite’s appearances as a character, see Mary B. McKinley, “Scriptural Speculum: What Can We See in the *Heptaméron*’s Mirror?,” in *Women’s Writing in the French Renaissance*, Proceedings of the Fifth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 7–9 July 1997, ed. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge, Eng., 1999), pp. 63–73.

of the *devisants*' subsequent discussion. Once rescued, the woman returns to France and spends the rest of her life teaching young girls to read and write, "n'ayant desir que d'exhorter ung chascun à l'amour et confiance de Nostre Seigneur" (p. 647). Like *nouvelles* 5 and 22, the story is presented—untypically in this case and with a distinct irony by the male narrator Simontault (p. 644)—as an example of virtue in the "weaker" sex (p. 648). When Oisille, referring to Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 3:6, reminds the company that neither women nor men deserve great praise, "car l'ung et l'autre, par son cueur et son vouloir ne faict rien que planter, et Dieu seul donne l'accroissement," Saffredent expands the reference in order to retort provocatively that the apostle wrote that Apollo planted and he watered, but that no women are said to have played any role in God's work (p. 648). Saffredent's remark may in part be intended humorously, but it is also an example of the disqualifying argument often made against women exercising a clerical ministry (the absence of positive Scriptural precedent). Is it a coincidence that Saffredent quotes mistakenly, confusing the roles of Paul and Apollo? In any case, Parlamente unambiguously qualifies Saffredent's use of the Bible as following the partial—in both senses of the term—practice of wicked men and reminds him that in other places Paul recommends himself to the women who have worked with him for the spread of the gospel. Women are given a religious role in the *Heptaméron*, a role that allows them to serve as conduits of grace and instruments of the divine will. Like men, they may do so to the extent that they avoid *cuyder* and let God work his purposes in them:

For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. . . . God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor. 1:25–29)

Women in the Nouvelles: Responding to the Querelles

"Au jeu nous sommes tous esgaulx" announces Hircan at the end of the prologue as the storytelling is about to begin (p. 92). However, if the *devisants* are equal as storytellers, their tales and comments present a world where social power structures belie any suggestion of equality. The *Heptaméron* offers, with few exceptions, stories about women or about relations between women and men. Almost all of the discussions open

with an explicit address to women: "Voilà mes dames..."³⁷ While many *nouvelles* examine women as objects of erotic desire, very few portray women as desiring subjects, and when they do it is almost inevitably in an unfavorable light.³⁸ Telling a wide variety of love stories, Marguerite often calls attention to the vulnerable position of women in her society even as she portrays some women in positions of power. The *Heptaméron* presents women both good and evil, clever and naive. It would be an error to project onto Marguerite and her writings the label of feminist in the modern sense of the term; nonetheless, she does portray many forms of injustice against women and their reactions to them. While the *Heptaméron* offers an examination of contemporary society, the prevalence of strife between the sexes also points to its place in the long tradition of philosophical and literary debates known as the *querelle des femmes*.³⁹

During Marguerite's lifetime, the *querelle* evolved. The popularity of Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* with its idealized portrait of the ducal court of Urbino had inspired reflections on the French court.⁴⁰ Early in the 1540s, several French writers composed works praising or commenting

³⁷ Cathleen Bauschatz has argued that women were the primary audience intended by Marguerite, "Voilà, mes dames...": Inscribed Women Listeners and Readers in the *Heptameron*," in *Critical Tales*, ed. Lyons and McKinley, pp. 104–22.

³⁸ For example: Jambicque in story 43; the duchess in story 70; the dame de Pamplune in story 35; the wife, eventually, in story 15 (see below). On Jambicque, see Hope Glidden, "Gender, Essence, and the Feminine (*Heptameron* 43)," in *Critical Tales*, ed. Lyons and McKinley, pp. 25–40.

³⁹ Ian Maclean's *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge, Eng., 1980) offers an excellent introduction to the theories arising in medical, legal, political, and theological writings that fed those debates. Constance Jordan analyzes the abundant production of 16th-century works praising or defaming women in *Renaissance Feminisms: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca, NY, 1990). See also Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the 'Querelle des Femmes,'" *Signs* 8.1 (1982), 4–28. On the *Heptaméron* in this context, see Émile Telle, *L'Œuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre, et la Querelle des Femmes* (Toulouse, 1937; Geneva, 1969); Deborah N. Losse, "Distortion as a Means of Reassessment: Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* and the 'Querelle des Femmes,'" *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 3 (1982), 75–84; and Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, "'La guerre des sexes' et la cause des femmes dans *L'Heptaméron*," in *"L'Heptaméron" de Marguerite de Navarre (II)*, ed. Chantal Liaroutzos (*Cahiers textuel*) 29 (Paris, 2006), pp. 87–101.

⁴⁰ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York, 2002). Published in 1528, describing the court of Urbino in 1506 and likely composed at that time, Castiglione's dialogues circulated in France in Italian well before they were translated into French in 1537. See Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano* (University Park, Penna., 1996), pp. 58–59, 63–64, 75–76.

on the ideal court lady: four works, Bertrand de La Borderie's *L'Amye de court*, Antoine Héroët's *La Parfaicte Amye*, Charles Fontaine's *La Contr'amyie de court*, and Paul Angier's *L'expérience de l'amyie de court contre la contre amyie*, offered different portraits of the lady and the elaborate rules governing love. Together they constitute a new debate, known as the *querelle des amyies*.⁴¹ Héroët—whose sister Marie appears in *nouvelle* 22—reflected in particular the new interest in Ficino's interpretation of Plato's theories of love. Scholars have argued that in two of her plays, *Comédie des Quatre Femmes* and *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*, Marguerite entered the dialogue of the *querelle des amyies*.⁴² Rabelais provided a caricature of misogynist discourse in the words of the doctor Rondibilis in the *Tiers Livre* (1546), a book he dedicated to Marguerite as she was composing her novella collection.⁴³ Scholars have cautioned readers to keep in mind the rhetorical character of these works and the possibility of paradox and irony in them. Following the model of the medieval *débat*, they present a strong, even extreme, position for or against women that may or may not represent their authors' personal beliefs.⁴⁴

Immediately in introducing the first story Simontault launches the debate by declaring: "Je me tray peine de faire ung recueil de tous les mauvais tours que les femmes ont faict aux pauvres homes, et si ne diray rien que pure verité" (p. 94). The wife of Saint-Aignan lives up to his promise. Introduced as "plus belle que vertueuse" and "ceste malheureuse femme" (*ibid.*), her character remains consistent to the end. One might argue that Saint-Aignan surpasses his wife in treachery, because he plots with a conjurer to have her killed along with his victim's father and the duchess of Alençon (Marguerite). Nevertheless, the moral that Simontault offers as he concludes his tale condemns only women: "regardez quel mal

⁴¹ The works of the *querelle des amyies* were published together as *Opusculs d'amour par Heroët, La Borderie, et autres divins poëtes* (Lyon, 1547); see <http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/gordon/gordonimages/Gordon1547_O68>; reprint intro. Michael A. Screech (New York, 1970). For individual works, see Antoine Héroët, "La Parfaicte Amye," in *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. F. Gohin (Paris, 1909); Bertrand de La Borderie, *L'Amie de court* (1542), ed. Danielle Trudeau (Paris, 1997).

⁴² Danielle Trudeau places those works in context in her edition of *L'Amie de court*. Trudeau follows but rectifies certain details in V. L. Saulnier's edition of Marguerite de Navarre, *Théâtre profane* (Paris, 1978 [1946]). See also Michael A. Screech, "An Interpretation of the *Querelle des Amyies*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 21 (1959), 103–30.

⁴³ François Rabelais, *Tiers Livre*, ch. 32, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Mireille Huchon (Paris, 1994), p. 453.

⁴⁴ See Floyd Gray, *Gender, Rhetoric and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* (Cambridge, Eng., 2000), pp. 6–32.

il vient d'une meschante femme et combien de maulx se feirent pour le peché de ceste cy. Vous trouverez que depuis que Eve fait pecher Adan, toutes les femmes ont prins possession de tormenter, tuer et danner les hommes" (p. 102). With that biblical reference to Genesis 3, Simontault follows a long tradition of theologians who judged Eve responsible for Adam's sin and thus for the Fall and its consequences.⁴⁵ By putting in her first story an argument that had been used for centuries to support misogynist claims, Marguerite announces at the outset that her book will enter that debate.

Declaring that she will counter Simontault's view, Oisille offers an example of impeccable virtue with the story of the mulekeeper's wife, who dies defending herself against the attack of a brutal rapist. Oisille portrays the woman as a "martire de chasteté" (p. 107) and tells her story as a saint's life. The *Heptaméron's* opening stories thus present the two opposing extremes of the *querelle des femmes*. The stories that follow in day 1, however, depict a broad range of moral or immoral behavior, and they raise questions about the decisions faced by both women and men. They feature women of different social classes, from a queen and a princess to a ferrywoman. Some are told in a somber tone, while others are delivered with humor. If those first ten stories portray "the war between the sexes,"⁴⁶ they also serve to refute the notion at the heart of the *querelle des femmes*—that women are either wholly good or wholly evil.

Marriage

The early and mid-16th century produced a remarkable number of works focusing on marriage. Erasmus wrote several dialogues on the subject in his *Colloquies*, as well as *Encomium matrimonii* (*In Praise of Marriage*, 1518) and *Christiani matrimonii institutio* (*The Institution of Christian Marriage*, 1526). The Christian ideal he described did not however correspond to the condition of marriage as many people experienced it. Published in 1546, Rabelais's *Tiers Livre* portrays comically Panurge's conflict between desire and fear as he considers taking a wife. Meanwhile Protestant reformers

⁴⁵ Margaret Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (New York, 1989) and Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York, 1989).

⁴⁶ Gérard Defaux, "Marguerite de Navarre et la guerre des sexes: *Heptaméron*, première Journée," *French Forum* 24.2 (1999), 133–61; Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *La Quenouille et la lyre* (Paris, 1998), pp. 80–98, and idem, "La guerre des sexes."

argued against the rule of clerical celibacy and proposed new ideals for couples entering into matrimony, no longer deemed a sacrament. On the Catholic side, the Council of Trent (1545–63) issued a decree in its final year, upholding traditional doctrine, while introducing much stricter regulations governing the way marriage was celebrated.⁴⁷

As a woman in the royal family, Marguerite experienced personally the ways in which political considerations and parental interests determined the choice of a woman's husband.⁴⁸ She portrays sympathetically Poline (story 19), who is prevented from marrying the man she loves by the marriage in whose household she lives. Floride (story 10) loves the son of the Infant Fortuné, but the king orders her to marry the duke of Cardona. Such stories show the pain caused by conventions that gave parents authority over their children's marriages, but Marguerite's criticism remains tacit. Her treatment of marriage in the *Heptaméron* reflects and contributes to discussions that proliferated in the 16th century and shows above all the complexities and resulting tensions inherent in the institution. Marguerite was not the first to sympathize with women caught in marriage negotiations controlled by men. In the 12th century, Marie de France in her *Lais* depicted with sympathy *mal-mariées*, young women married to men many years older than they, men, often jealous and cruel, who were able to choose a young, beautiful bride because of their wealth and power.⁴⁹ The *Heptaméron* offers several such stories. *Nouvelle* 25 presents an amorous exploit of François I, thinly disguised as "un bien grand prince" (p. 366), who seduces the young wife of a Parisian lawyer and enjoys an ongoing adulterous relationship with her. The narrator introduces the story with a description of the lawyer that draws on the traditional features of the

⁴⁷ Reinier Leushuis provides a detailed context for and analysis of writings about marriage in the mid-16th century in *Le Mariage et l'"amitié courtoise" dans le dialogue et le récit bref de la Renaissance* (Florence, 2003); see esp. pp. 207–70 on the *Heptaméron*. See also Jean Céard, "Le Mariage dans l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre," in *Le Mariage au temps de la Renaissance*, ed. Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies (Paris, 1993), pp. 195–210; Edward Benson, "Marriage Ancestral and Conjugal in the *Heptaméron*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9.2 (1979), 261–75; Cathleen Bauschatz, "Rabelais and Marguerite de Navarre on Sixteenth-Century Views of Clandestine Marriage," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34.2 (2003), 395–408. Still very valuable is Michael A. Screech, *The Rabelaisian Marriage: Aspects of Rabelais's Religion, Ethics and Comic Philosophy* (London, 1958).

⁴⁸ See the introduction to this volume. On the political context of Marguerite's marriages, see Laurent Ripart, "Les mariages de Marguerite," in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992: Actes du Colloque international de Pau, 1992*, ed. Nicole Cazauban and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan, 1995), pp. 59–83.

⁴⁹ Kasimierz Kupisz, "La mal-mariée et l'*Heptaméron*," *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich* 21 (1978), 23–40.

mal-mariée's husband. While he is neither cruel nor jealous, he is rich and no longer physically attractive. Esteemed in his profession and a widower from a first union that produced no children, he hopes for better success in marrying a second time and chooses an 18-year-old girl with a beautiful face and body. The second marriage produces no more children than the first, a fact that suggests his impotence. Like its medieval predecessors in the *mal-mariée* tradition, story 25 uses an opening emphasis on the unattractive husband as a rhetorical strategy to elicit the reader's sympathy for the young lovers and indulgence toward their adultery.⁵⁰ A number of other stories treat adultery with humor. In *nouvelle* 3, the king of Naples's seduction of a young wife leads that woman's husband to avenge himself by seducing the queen. Saffredent tells the story with a light touch calculated to produce laughter. Ennasuite obliges as, no doubt, do most of the story's readers.

Other tales of adultery are not so forgiving in their depiction of unfaithful wives. In story 32, Bernage, an emissary of the French king traveling in Germany, seeks a night's lodging in a castle where he witnesses the punishment the host inflicts on his adulterous wife. Her head shaved, a sign commonly imposed on women accused of adultery, she must drink from the skull of her lover, whom the husband murdered, and contemplate his bones, which have been placed in her bedroom. Rather than plead for the husband's compassion because of his wife's suffering, Bernage appeals to his host's desire to perpetuate his lineage through heirs that the repentant wife could bear. After some reflection, the German nobleman sees the wisdom in Bernage's words, takes pity on his wife, and eventually receives from her "beaucoup de beaulx enfans" (p. 426). Oisille ends her story by reminding the women in the group that without God's help, "il n'y a aucun d'entre nous qui ne puisse faire pis." Parlamente says, "Je trouve . . . ceste puniton autant raisonnable qu'il est possible" (p. 427). The other women have different views about whether or not death would have been a more fitting punishment. They soon hear another tale where death is the solution chosen by the husband. In story 36, the Président de Grenoble poisons with premeditation and impunity his young wife, who, "voyant que son mary estoit viel" (p. 450), had taken a lover. Ennasuite makes her position clear: "Je ne veulx pas . . . par cela, louer la conscience du Président, mais, oy bien, monstrier la legierté d'une femme." The murdered

⁵⁰ On story 25's moral ambiguities, see Mary B. McKinley, "Narrative Complexities in the *Heptameron*," in *Approaches to Teaching*, ed. Winn, pp. 81–85.

wife serves as a warning to other women, and Ennasuite concludes: "Et les hommes et les femmes sont commungs aux vices et vertuz." Parlemente observes: "ceste pauvre femme-là porta la peyne que plusieurs meritoient. Et croy que le mary, puisqu'il s'en vouloit venger, se gouverna avecq une merueilleuse prudence et sapience" (p. 453). Longarine criticizes the Président for "sa grande malice . . . et longue et cruelle vengeance," proof that he acted without any concern for God or conscience. The men justify the Président's actions, however. Hircan asks: "Et que eussiez-vous doncq voulu qu'il eust faict . . . pour se venger de la plus grande injure que la femme peut faire à l'homme?" Geburon observes that the Président was thinking of his family's reputation, and Saffredent notes with pleasure about crimes committed in the heat of passion that "les theologiens estiment ces pechez-là faciles à pardonner" (p. 454).⁵¹

Simply by following *nouvelle* 36, stories 37 and 38 show the sharp contrast when the adulterer is the husband. In 37 a wife whose husband becomes bored with their marriage waits on him patiently each time he returns from his trysts. When, after a year of her forbearance, he continues to leave their bed each night, she follows him to the room of one of her chambermaids and sets the bed on fire. The husband, chastened as she berates him, agrees to dismiss the chambermaid and to torment his wife no longer. Longarine tells a similar story in 38, but here the wife restores her husband to good health each time he returns from several days of debauchery with a woman who farms their land. She eventually goes to the woman's filthy shack and, "sans collere" (p. 463), has the room cleaned and orders a new bed and sheets. Her Griselda-like patience has the desired effect.⁵² Seeing his wife's kindness, the husband is filled with remorse and ends his visits to the woman. Both stories close with the narrator's assurance that the husband's repentance was permanent. Dagoucine concludes: "Et depuis ceste heure-là, vesquirent ensemble en si grande amytié, que mesmes les fautes passées, par le bien qui en estoit advenu, leur estoit

⁵¹ Quoting Jean Papon, *Trias Judiciel du second notaire* (Lyon, 1575), Natalie Davis notes that "one of the two cases where homicide was 'excusable' in the sixteenth century was 'to avenge the adultery of a wife or daughter, because of the intolerable anguish ['desplaisir'] to him offended,'" *Fiction in the Archives*, p. 95.

⁵² A story of a wife's patience in the face of her husband's infidelity recalls Boccaccio's Griselda, the paragon of patience in the final story of the *Decameron*. However, story 38 closely follows one of Erasmus's *Colloquies*, "Marriage" (1523) and a story in Pierre de Lesnauderie's, *La Louenge de Mariaige et Recueil des hystoires des bonnes, vertueuses et illustres femmes* (1523), "De la femme du Seigneur de Darembon," reproduced in Émile Telle, "Une autre source de la nouvelle 38 de l'*Heptaméron*," *Romanic Review* 25 (1934), 375-78.

augmentation de contentement" (pp. 459–60). It is hard not to read that rosy image as ironic, for it contradicts a striking remark that he made at the beginning of his tale, after describing the couple's initially happy marriage: "la félicité, à laquelle succede tousjours son contraire, commencea à se diminuer" (p. 457). That pessimistic observation could serve to describe most of the marriages in the *Heptaméron* as well as the human condition in general as many of the stories portray it.

Stories 37 and 38 show different ways in which a wife can react to her husband's infidelity. Story 15, the third longest in the collection, illustrates how a husband's neglect can change his wife's character. Here the king, François I, promotes the marriage of one of his favorite courtiers, a man of little wealth, to a beautiful but still very young woman, "si riche, que ung grand seigneur s'en fust bien contenté" (p. 240). The husband neglects his bride in favor of another woman and, because he now controls his wife's fortune, deprives her financially as well as emotionally. As her beauty blossoms over the next few years, her love for her husband grows, but he continues to ignore her and she falls into a deep melancholy. A prince takes pity on her and engages her in conversations. Longarine explains her response: "Et combien qu'elle eust tousjours desir de conserver son honneur, si prenoit-elle grand plaisir de parler à luy et de se veoir aymée et estimée; chose dont quasi elle estoit affamée" (p. 242). Their friendship develops honorably, but the king, learning of it, expresses his displeasure, and the prince, "qui aymoît trop mieulx la bonne grace du Roy que toutes les dames du monde" (p. 243), explains to her that he must stop seeing her. Her husband, aware of the prince's affections, shows more interest in her, but now it is she who avoids him, "desirant luy rendre partye des ennuictz qu'elle avoit euz pour estre de luy peu aymée" (p. 244). Little by little, the narrator traces a dramatic change in the wife's behavior. She initiates a friendship with another attractive young man at court and, when her husband tells her that he will kill her "sans pitié ni compassion" (p. 245) if he finds her talking to that man, she turns to still another. The marriage spirals into a succession of jealous scenes, threats of murder, and extravagant deceptions. The wife's character evolves from that of an innocent and loving young bride to that of a woman who moves from lover to lover, following what some have seen as the male model of infidelity.⁵³

⁵³ See Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *La Conversation conteuse: Les nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris, 1992), pp. 175–88. Patricia Francis Cholakian, "Heroic Infidelity: Novella 15," in *Heroic Virtue, Comic Infidelity: Reassessing Marguerite de Navarre's "Heptaméron,"*

The attitude of the narrator, Longarine, toward the wife is initially sympathetic. Even as the woman's behavior becomes more and more reckless, putting her at risk of provoking her husband's fury, Longarine speaks with concern rather than condemnation, including details that encourage the reader to adopt the same point of view, like the old woman servant who fears for her mistress's life (p. 251). At the end of the story, Longarine offers a lesson to launch the discussion: "Voylà, mes dames, que sans espargner nostre sexe, je veulx bien monstrer aux maris que souvent les femmes de grand cueur sont plustost vaincues de l'ire de la vengeance, que de la douleur de l'amour; à quoy ceste-ci sceut long temps resister, mais à la fin fut vaincue du desespoir" (p. 255). Longarine thus begins by suggesting that women are driven to be unfaithful out of revenge arising from despair caused by their husbands. However, the voice of a universal moral lesson, a lesson echoing the Letter of Paul to the Romans, 12:21 and admitting no individual exceptions, immediately takes over as she adds: "Ce que ne doit estre nulle femme de bien; pource que, en quelque sorte que ce soit, ne sçauroit trouver excuse à mal faire. Car de tant plus les occasions en sont données grandes, de tant plus se doyvent monstrer vertueuses à resister et vaincre le mal en bien, et non pas rendre mal pour mal" (pp. 255–56). Moving from sympathetic narrator of one woman's plight in marriage to the role of moral commentator as the discussion begins, Longarine's voice backs away from the wife's quandary and establishes an affective distance that admits no pleading of circumstantial excuses, no exceptions to the rule.

While the *Heptaméron* shows many women unhappy in marriage, two of the best-known stories portray women deprived of marriage. Rolandine (story 21) and her aunt (story 40) suffer from the neglect and cruelty of the same man, Count Jossebelin, Rolandine's father and her aunt's brother, who fails in his familial obligation to arrange suitable marriages for the two women. Parmente, who tells both stories, blames the failure on the count's avarice, implying that he was unwilling to provide them with dowries. She also states that an excessive love for his sister prevented him from accepting any of the good offers of marriage made for her. Both women eventually find a man of lower social status whom they love and marry in secret. When the count discovers his sister's marriage, he has her husband killed before her eyes and imprisons her in a tower. There she

ed. Dora E. Polachek (Amherst, 1993), pp. 62–76, sees the story as Marguerite's answer to Boccaccio's *Griselda*.

establishes her independence by devoting herself to God and refusing to leave her "hermitage" (p. 473). The same tower later becomes Rolandine's prison after her marriage is revealed and her husband flees the kingdom. The detail of the clandestine marriages, one of many similarities that link the two stories, reflects the intense debates in juridical and theological circles about the role of parental or familial consent.⁵⁴ Although in telling the tales of Rolandine and her aunt, Parlamente shows sympathy for the two women and emphasizes the cruelty of Count Jossebelin in preventing them from enjoying married life, she opens the discussion following story 40 with unequivocal support of rules requiring parental consent: "Je prie à Dieu, mesdames, que cest exemple vous soit si profitable, que nul de vous ayt envie de soy marier, pour son plaisir, sans le consentement de ceulx à qui on doit porter obeissance" (p. 474). The difference between Parlamente's voice in the story and in the ensuing conversation creates a discordant tension in the narrative, one that recalls Longarine's change of perspective in story 15, as well as conflicting positions in other tales and their discussions. Edward Benson argues that, in Marguerite's lifetime, an ideal of marriage based on mutual attraction and affection grew to trouble the traditional aristocratic model of marriage arranged by parents to protect and perpetuate family property.⁵⁵ Marguerite gives voice to both visions of marriage in the *Heptaméron* and allows them to coexist in conflict just as they did in 16th-century society. Toward the end of the discussion, Parlamente makes an attempt at compromise: "Il me semble . . . que les personnes qui se submeectent à la volonté de Dieu ne regardent ny à la gloire, ny à l'avarice, ny à la volupté, mais par une amour vertueuse et du consentement des parens, desirent de vivre en l'estat de mariage, comme Dieu et Nature l'ordonnent" (p. 478). Those idealistic words cannot silence the institutional authoritative voice that dominates the discussion; likewise, the alternative voice protesting in the stories, to which we will return, remains on the printed page and in the reader's memory.

Another example of the tension between sympathetic narrative voice and strict affective distance is offered by *nouvelle* 60, in which a Parisian man is abandoned by his wife who runs away with a cantor. The husband, deceived by her ruse, believes that she is dead and remarries, choosing this time a beautiful and faithful young woman who bears him

⁵⁴ See Bauschatz, "Rabelais and Marguerite"; Benson, "Marriage"; Leushuis, *Le Mariage*, pp. 217–26.

⁵⁵ Benson, "Marriage."

several children. After 14 years, the truth that the wife is still alive and living with the cantor is revealed. The happily "married" couple is devastated by the news. The narrator suggests that they might have chosen to conceal the truth and continue their life together, "mais l'Eglise y voulut mettre ordre" (p. 608). The Church forces the couple to separate, the cantor to dismiss "sa layde amye," and the husband to resume living with his legal wife. Within the story, the narrator, Geburon, shows clear sympathy for the couple whose happy, innocent life is disrupted by the reappearance of the renegade, albeit legal, wife. His affective identification with those characters is in sharp contrast with the abrupt and unfeeling intrusion of the Church as it moves in to "mettre ordre," an intervention that Geburon never questions. He concludes by placing responsibility on the husband, who, he opines, could have prevented the entire disaster by keeping a closer watch on his wife from the beginning. Here the tension between sympathy for the individuals and objective recognition of the Church's authority is present within the story itself. After Geburon's concluding comment, the brief discussion veers toward women who are drawn to becoming the concubines of clerics.⁵⁶ The reader is left to reflect on the dissonance between marriage as it is legislated and marriage as it is lived.

Women Silenced, Women Speaking Out

Christian tradition from its beginnings imposed silence on women. If eloquence was a quality greatly admired in men, silence was the corresponding virtue demanded of women. The *Heptaméron* offers memorable scenes of silenced women: the wife of the German nobleman in story 32, who speaks humbly only after her husband gives Bernage permission to engage her in conversation; the princess in story 4, whose *dame d'honneur* counsels her to remain silent instead of accusing publicly the man who broke into her bedroom and attempted to rape her. However, women also speak eloquently in the *Heptaméron*, beginning with the *dame d'honneur*, who describes persuasively the social mores that would cast doubt on the princess's chastity if she were to speak out (pp. 123–25). In this case the lady uses rhetorical skills to explain and uphold "la loi du non-parler" to the

⁵⁶ Stories 60 and 61 are strikingly similar. See André Tournon, "Doubles et hybrides dans l'*Heptaméron*," in *Études sur "L'Heptaméron" de Marguerite de Navarre*, Colloque de Nice, ed. Christine Martineau-Génieys (Nice, 1996), pp. 7–19.

princess.⁵⁷ However, Marguerite also presents many examples of strong-willed women who break the law of silence and speak out eloquently to defend themselves against men who abuse their authority. The young girl in *nouvelle* 41 making her Christmas Eve confession is distressed by the priest's insistence that she allow him to attach the cord of his Franciscan habit around her naked waist as penance. In spite of her initial timidity and tears, she rejects the priest's advances in a clearly constructed statement that distinguishes between religious doctrine and the confessor's abuse of it. She calls on the authority of the Church that the priest has misappropriated and refuses to be coerced, even though she knows he will refuse her absolution. The girl speaks with a strong voice that allows no ambiguity; her words belie her youth and show an impressive *sang froid* that is almost implausible in the circumstances. Although her conscience remains troubled from fear that she has acted disobediently, she succeeds in defending herself by speaking. The young girl's story ends in her victory over the confessor and her escape from his efforts to control her. Unlike the princess in story 4, she incriminates her aggressor when she tells her mother about his strange penance, and the countess who has invited the Franciscan to her house has him punished.⁵⁸

Several other stories feature much longer, eloquent speeches by women protesting injustices that they have long tolerated but will no longer suffer in silence. When Rolandine's clandestine marriage is discovered, the queen sends for her and publicly excoriates her for bringing disgrace upon her family. Rolandine reacts to the attack with equanimity, responding in a powerful speech of over 70 lines. Her sentences flow without hesitation as she challenges the royal and parental authority that has failed her and insists that, given that failure, she has offended neither God nor her conscience by marrying according to her own will. Unable to counter this argument rationally, the queen can only continue to berate her not only for her marriage but now for her transgressive act of speech: "vous parlez audacieusement, sans en avoir la larme à l'œil" (p. 317).⁵⁹ Undeterred,

⁵⁷ Colette H. Winn, "La Loi du non-parler dans l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre," *Romance Quarterly* 33.2 (1986), 157–68. Deborah N. Losse analyzes the "extrafictional authorial voice" of Marguerite in "Authorial and Narrative Voice in the *Heptaméron*," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 23, n.s. 11 (1987), 223–42.

⁵⁸ The story is one of several analyzed by Mary B. McKinley, "Telling Secrets: Sacramental Confession and Narrative Authority in the *Heptameron*," in *Critical Tales*, ed. Lyons and McKinley, pp. 146–71.

⁵⁹ As John Lyons remarks, "Rolandine's crime is clearly a crime of speech," "The *Heptaméron* and the Foundation of Critical Narrative," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986), 150–63.

Rolandine defends her right to marry and to speak publicly in her own defense, acknowledging only God as her judge and rejecting the law of silence imposed on women. Presented as a spontaneous expression of her righteous indignation, her speech is a masterpiece of rhetoric. It does not bring her freedom nor does it persuade the queen to accept her clandestine marriage. However, it introduces her testimony into the record when Parlamente recounts it in direct discourse while telling her story.

In an equally striking example of a woman breaking with apparent spontaneity into a rhetorically polished speech, the neglected wife in *nouvelle* 15 accuses her husband of being the cause of her errant behavior. After his threats to kill her have no effect, he sends for her and she fears he is about to act on his promise. Whereas in the past when accused by him, she had dissolved terrified into tears, this time, “elle qui avoit desja passé les premières apprehensions de la mort, reprint cuer, se delibérant, avant que morir, de ne luy celler la verité” (pp. 247–48). She reminds him of her initial love for him and tells him how much his coldness made her suffer. She traces her attraction to the men who pursued her to her despair over his preferring his mistress to her: “Et vous, monsieur, qui estes seul la cause de mon malheur, vouldriez-vous prendre vengeance d’une œuvre, dont si long temps a, vous m’avez donné exemple, sinon que la vostre estoit sans honneur et conscience” (p. 249). The sudden eruption of the wife’s eloquent speech—Renja Salminen calls it “un discours oratoire fulgurant” (ed. cit., p. 705)—surprises the reader as much as it does the husband: “Le mary, oyant ces propos pleins de verité, dictz d’un si beau visage, avecq une grace tant assurée et audacieuse, qu’elle ne monstroient ne craindre ne meriter nulle pugnition, se trouva tant surprins d’estonnement, qu’il ne sceut que luy respondre, sinon que l’honneur d’un homme et d’une femme n’estoient pas semblables” (pp. 250–51). His succinct reply offers as self-evident the different codes of honor to which men and women were held. That double standard, taken for granted by the characters in many of the stories, is nevertheless questioned and held up for judgment implicitly by the story and explicitly by the wife’s accusation. As in the case of Rolandine, the woman’s words leave the person to whom they are

(p. 153); developed in *Exemplum*, ch. 2, pp. 72–117. For another approach to Rolandine’s story, see Carla Freccero, “Rewriting the Rhetoric of Desire in the *Heptameron*,” in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological, and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth-Century England and France*, ed. Marie-Rose Logan and Peter L. Rudnytsky (Detroit, 1991), pp. 298–312.

addressed unmoved. But they register a complaint that remains in the memory of the *Heptaméron*'s readers.⁶⁰ In defiance of her society's gendered access to the right to speak, Marguerite allows a number of female characters to deliver eloquent orations. Through their words, she expresses women's anger against the unjust authorities, parental, royal and ecclesiastical, that controlled so many aspects of their lives.

Violence Against Women

Beginning in the prologue, violence besets the characters in the *Heptaméron*. Men as well as women are assaulted in the tales, inaugurated under the sign of violence. The young Du Mesnil in *nouvelle* 1 meets his death with no warning when the murderer hired by Saint-Aignan attacks him in a stairwell with a sword. A sword wielded by the bestial servant in story 2 leaves the mulekeeper's wife to die from its 25 wounds. Although other stories bring relief from these scenes of bloodshed, violence recurs. Story 31 portrays a particularly depraved Franciscan who cuts the throats of three servants in order to kidnap the wife in a family near his convent. Women are most often the victims of violence, usually at the hands of men. In story 51, the duke of Urbino seeks to punish a young woman in his wife's service who has acted as a go-between for his son and the object of his affections. The duchess helps the young woman seek refuge from the duke's anger in a convent. The duke gives his word that he wishes her no harm, but when she returns he has her arrested and "le plus tost qu'il peut, et, sans forme de justice, obliant Dieu et l'honneur de sa maison, fait cruellement pendre ceste pauvre demoiselle" (p. 553). As in tale 21, women may behave cruelly toward other women over whose lives they exercise some form of control, but physical violence toward women is inflicted only by men.

Rape and attempted rape are a frequent form of violence against women in the *Heptaméron*. Three of the first five stories involve scenes of sexual aggression by men on unwilling women, and day 1 closes with the long saga of Amadour and Floride in which Amadour's performance

⁶⁰ In Rabelais's *Tiers Livre*, the theologian Hippothadée tells Panurge how to treat a spouse in order to avoid being cuckolded: "vous de vostre cousté l'entretiendrez en amitié conjugale, continuerez en preud'homie, luy monstrerez bon exemple, vivrez pudiquement, chastement, vertueusement en vostre mesnage, comme voulez qu'elle de son cousté vive" (ed. Huchon, p. 447). Neither Panurge nor the husband in story 15 is willing to heed such counsel.

as a perfect courtly lover disintegrates when he tries to rape his beloved.⁶¹ The modern French word for rape, *viol*, never appears in the *Heptaméron*. Marguerite uses only the expression *prendre par force*.⁶² At least one 16th-century reader, Pierre de Brantôme, claimed to have been informed that the princess assaulted by her host in tale 4 was Marguerite de Navarre herself. That testimony led Patricia Cholakian to argue that the experience of fighting off an attempted rape and being unable to accuse her aggressor was the traumatic experience that led Marguerite to write about rape in the *Heptaméron*.⁶³ The first instance of this, in story 2, presents a brutal scene where the servant who kills and rapes the mulekeeper's wife is described as "plus bestial que les bestes avecq lesquelles il avoit esté longtemps" (p. 105). The story moves the women who hear it to tears and compassion as well as to admiration, as Oisille exhorts them to humility before the dead woman's example.⁶⁴

Story 45 tells in a much lighter tone the tale of a servant girl who is sexually assaulted by her master, a tapestry maker. He is encouraged by his wife, who thinks he is disciplining the girl. The story reflects a popular tradition by which on the feast of the Holy Innocents, 28 December, people punished the lazy by waking them in their beds and beating or spanking them (*bailler les Innocents*). The Feast of the Holy Innocents, commemorating the male children killed by King Herod (Matt. 2:16–18), was one of several feasts associated with the Feast of Fools, a carnival-like

⁶¹ Floyd Gray underscores the irony in portraying Amadour as a perfect courtier in *Gender, Rhetoric and Print Culture*, pp. 47–61. See also Carla Freccero "Rape's Disfiguring Figures: Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*, Day 1:10," in *Rape and Representation*, ed. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York, 1991), pp. 227–47. Timothy Hampton emphasizes the political and territorial stakes motivating the story, "On the Border: Geography, Gender, and Narrative Form in the *Heptaméron*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 57.4 (1996), 517–44.

⁶² Kathryn Gravdal has traced the development of rape scenes, the words used to name them, and the way they were "aestheticized" in *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia, 1991).

⁶³ Patricia Francis Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Carbondale, 1991). With Rouben C. Cholakian, she continued to develop that argument in *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance* (New York, 2006). See also Nancy Virtue, "Telling the Story of Rape in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*," *Romance Quarterly* 44.2 (1997), 67–79.

⁶⁴ Mary McKinley has argued that Marguerite fashions the tale as a saint's life, following the literary conventions of medieval hagiographers, and that she portrays the dying woman as a mystic in ecstasy; see "Agony, Ecstasy, and the Mulekeeper's Wife: A Reading of *Heptaméron* 2," in *A French Forum: Mélanges de littérature française offerts à Raymond C. et Virginia A. La Charité*, ed. Gérard Defaux and Jerry Nash (Paris, 2000), pp. 129–42. Cf. Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, pp. 21–41.

time after Christmas when religious traditions and authorities were parodied. Clément Marot's epigram "Du jour des Innocents," like story 45, conveys the erotic nature of the prank. Simontault tells the story in that spirit, lingering on the details of the husband buying fine switches (*verges* in French, a euphemism for penis) and soaking them in brine to make them more effective. His wife remains downstairs while the husband carries the switches up to the servant girl's bed "et là, luy bailla les Innocents d'autre façon qu'il n'avoit dict à sa femme" (p. 515). The girl screams out as the husband attacks her, but the wife suspects nothing, thinking he is beating her. When the girl later complains to her mistress, the wife answers that her husband did what she had asked him to do. The girl, thinking that her virtuous mistress approved of the husband's routine, decides there must be no harm in it and allows her master "to give her the Innocents" often. The story ends with a comic scene of mistaken identity, following which the husband once again succeeds in deceiving his wife and avoids having his affair with the servant girl discovered. In the ensuing discussion, Parlamente is not amused; she calls the husband "merveilleusement mauvais" (p. 518) for deceiving both his wife and the servant girl. However, Hircan maintains the comic tone that Simontault established. *Nouvelle* 45 belongs to a different narrative tradition from the other stories depicting rape discussed so far. Its ribald timbre recalls medieval fabliaux, stories that laugh at the foibles of the lower classes. Such scenes offer a complaisant image of sexual violence, allowing the writer and reader to minimize the injustice always inherent in rape. In story 45, the naive servant girl's eventual acceptance of her master's lustful demands makes her appear to be less of a victim and dulls the memory of her initial screams. Parlamente does not join in the laughter at the girl's treatment, but neither does she prevent Hircan and Simontault from enjoying the story and admiring the husband.

"Courtly" Love, "Italian" Vices: Erotic and Biblical Intertexts

If the *Heptaméron* offers little evidence that marriage holds enduring happiness, it also shows that the social codes governing extramarital relations are not the same for men as for women (see above). Male characters and *devisants* readily pursue amorous liaisons by seduction or by force. Women find themselves in a double bind. On the one hand, husbands, fathers, and male relatives expect them to be faithful wives; on the other hand, *serviteurs* or male admirers seek indulgence from their mistress,

frequently in the form of physical gratification. These tensions can be observed among the *devisants* themselves, some of whom are linked by marriage or relationships of amorous service. The first day, for example, sees an exchange between Parlamente and her husband Hircan in which the former admits she is well aware of her spouse's infidelities. For his part, Hircan concedes that his wife's infidelity would not anger him as long as he remained ignorant of it (pp. 136–37 and 139). That is an important proviso, difficult to fulfill in the long term and one to which men are generally not subject in relation to their wives. The form of the short story undoubtedly favors plots based on some kind of crisis that is either tragic or comic in nature. Nonetheless, within the *nouvelles* the absence of happy lovers is striking. Rather, many tales seem to evoke the codes of the courtly love tradition only to expose their inherent contradictions and impossibilities. What might be termed the "courtly plot" is thus undone in the *Heptaméron*, as the work comments on social realities and engages with a potent literary tradition.⁶⁵ Two major *nouvelles*, placed strategically at the end of the first and the seventh days, serve as illustration.

Tale 10 seems to have been the one that Marguerite herself would have told as her final contribution on the last day of storytelling projected by the French court.⁶⁶ The unraveling of the courtly plot is here at its clearest, as the relationship between Amadour, the *serviteur* of Floride, a woman of higher rank, evolves into a close romantic friendship that subsequently turns to bitterness and violence as each character fails to fulfill the expectations of the other. Intertextual allusions point unmistakably to the tradition of the chivalric romance: notably, the male protagonist's name recalls that of the eponymous hero of the highly successful novel *Amadis de Gaule*, published in French translation from the Spanish original in 24 volumes beginning in 1540. Spain is also the setting for *nouvelle* 10. Finally, after the death of her husband, for whom she felt no love, and that of Amadour, whom, despite everything, she could not help but love, Floride "s'en alla randre religieuse au monastere de Jesus prenant pour mary et amy Celuy qui l'avoit delivrée d'une amour si vehemente que celle

⁶⁵ See Gary Ferguson, "Désagréations: Des 'mauvais déboires' de l'amour à l'h/Histoire au féminin," in *"L'Heptaméron" de Marguerite de Navarre (II)*, ed. Liartoutzos, pp. 45–57.

⁶⁶ In BnF, fr. 1513, the story of Floride and Amadour already figures as number 10. The story thus kept the same numerical place in the collection's final form but apparently shifted from an intended inclusion on the final day to the final story of the first day.

d'Amadour, et d'un ennuy si grand que de la compaignye d'un tel mari" (p. 195).

This flight from the world, involving a transference of affection from other human beings to God, the true husband, friend, and lover, is seen frequently in the *Heptaméron*. As noted earlier, it happens in *nouvelle* 19, as the two thwarted lovers sublimate their frustrated desire by becoming Franciscans. It happens, most strikingly, at the end of *nouvelle* 70, Marguerite's retelling of the story of the châteleine de Vergi—not for the duchess, who is the cause of the death of the lovers, but for her victims, the châteleine and her *serviteur*, and the duke. The story's placement at the end of the seventh day is redolent with symbolism in a Judeo-Christian perspective. The metaphysical reflection developed in the *nouvelle* will be discussed below. It is enough to note here its unique status in the collection since, in retelling a story that goes back to the 13th century, it is the only one presented as a deliberate exception to the *devisants'* rule of recounting only events that they have seen with their own eyes or heard tell of by a trustworthy witness and of excluding the art of "gens de lettres." Among all the available courtly literature to which Marguerite might have turned, she cannot by chance have chosen one of the darkest and most tragic tales, one that allows the narrator Oisille to present the women with the following lesson: "Il me semble que vous devez tirer exemple de cecy, pour vous garder de mectre vostre affection aux hommes, car, quelque honneste ou vertueuse qu'elle soyt, elle a tousjours à la fin quelque mauuays desboire" (p. 681). Oisille's words echo but expand psalm 146:3[/145:2–3]—"Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help"⁶⁷—and she goes on to refer to Saint Paul to include married people in the moral drawn from the tragic end of the lovers. The courtly intertext is thus held up to the Bible in a conclusion that is soberingly pessimistic, but nonetheless characteristic of the tales of the *Heptaméron*. At the end of *nouvelle* 19, Parlamente claims that "jamais homme n'aymera parfaicement Dieu, qu'il n'ait parfaicement aymé quelque creature en ce monde" (p. 289). At one and the same time, she is drawing on neo-Platonic ideas and echoing the First Letter of Saint John 4:20: "those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen."⁶⁸ The tense of the second verb in Parlamente's formulation

⁶⁷ Oisille quotes the same psalm verses in introducing *nouvelle* 51.

⁶⁸ Later in the discussion, Simontault quotes the same passage from 1 John (p. 292). It is also quoted by Saffredent following story 36 in an attempt to argue for the inconsequence of sins committed under the effect of erotic passion. He is reproved by Oisille

is significant, however. Saint Paul's present ("do not love") becomes a past ("n'ait . . . aymé"). The working out of the progression from human to divine love in the tales is fraught with difficulty and often takes place through disillusionment, renunciation, or loss.

The courtly tradition is evoked in another tale placed at the close of a day, day 5, the intended center of the work.⁶⁹ In *nouvelle* 50, the outcome is also fatal, involving the death of the couple, but the story is told in comic vein, a genial parody involving a rather hapless man who falls victim to lovesickness.⁷⁰ The intertext here is not only the "courtly plot," however; it is also Boccaccio's *Decameron*, whose 50th tale concerns the sodomite Pietro di Vinciolo.⁷¹ This subject might seem far removed from that of *Heptaméron* 50. Nevertheless, Marguerite's tale is set in Italy (Cremona) and its protagonist's name, Jehan Pietre, is particularly suggestive since it signifies mediocre, wretched, false or counterfeit, but is also a rather malicious resolution into French of the Italian Pietro.⁷² The following story, *nouvelle* 51, discussed earlier, is also set in Italy and concerns the cruelty of the duke of Urbino. In what constitutes something of an echo of the triad of vices attributed to clerics (see above), Longarine claims that cruelty is one of three vices typical of Italians.⁷³ The second, which is said to explain the duke's opposition to his son marrying below his rank, is his avarice. The third vice is alluded to by Hircan, who claims that Italians "font leur Dieu des choses qui sont contre nature" (p. 555). No speaker takes up this idea initially, but after the discussion of avarice, Parlamente embarks on a long paraphrase of Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans 1:18–32, stating that

saint Pol n'avoit point oblyé les vices des Italiens, et de tous ceulx qui cuydent passer et surmonter les aultres en honneur, prudence et raison

(p. 455). On *nouvelle* 19, and in particular on the necessity of the "eye of faith," see Jan Miernowski, "L'intentionnalité dans l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 63 (2001), 201–25 (pp. 207–13).

⁶⁹ In BnF, fr. 1513, story 50 is the last of the 28 tales recorded, which include the totality of the *nouvelles* for days 3 and 4 and four of those for day 5. The placement of this story at the end of day 5 is thus the result of a subsequent deliberate decision.

⁷⁰ See Gary Ferguson, "Pedestrian Chivalry: Novella 50 and the Unsaddling of Courtly Tradition in the *Heptaméron*," in *Heroic Virtue*, ed. Polachek, pp. 118–31.

⁷¹ On this novella, its adaptation of Apuleius and its translation into French by Premierfait and Le Maçon, see Gary Ferguson, *Queer (Re)Readings in the French Renaissance: Homosexuality, Gender, Culture* (Aldershot, Eng. and Burlington, Vt., 2008), ch. 1. Vêrard's *Cent nouvelles* expunge completely the subject of sodomy from the story.

⁷² There is some minor variation in the form of the name. Gruget gives "Jean Pietre," cf. ed. Cazauran and Lefèvre. Salminen ed. gives "Jehan Petri."

⁷³ On "Italian vices" in the *Heptaméron*, see Ferguson, "Péchés capitaux."

humaine, en laquelle ilz se fondent si fort, qu'ilz ne rendent point à Dieu la gloire qui luy appartient: parquoy, le Tout Puissant, jaloux de son honneur, rend plus insensé que les bestes enragées ceulx qui ont cuydé avoir plus de sens que tous les aultres hommes, leur faisant monstrier par œuvres contre nature qu'ilz sont en sens reprouvez. (pp. 555–56)

At this point Parlamente is interrupted by Longarine, who exclaims that this is the third vice she had in mind. The allusion is discreet but clear: the three vices of the Italians are cruelty, avarice, and sodomy.

As will be discussed below, the Letter to the Romans is the object of the *devisants'* reading and of Oisille's commentary each morning during their first five days at Serrance. Particularly striking is the fact that this is not the first time this precise passage from Romans has been quoted in the *Heptaméron*. Two days earlier, after tale 34, it had been cited by Oisille herself; this doubling of such a long and detailed paraphrase of a biblical passage appears unique within the work and draws our attention. At stake in the earlier conversation is the nature of true wisdom and what passions need to be overcome in order to attain it, a question discussed initially in relation to the teachings of the philosophers of antiquity. Parlamente insists that "il est impossible que la victoire de nous-mesmes se face par nous-mesmes, sans ung merveilleux orgueil qui est le vice que chacun doit le plus craindre" (p. 439). Oisille then quotes the passage from Romans that associates "unnatural" sexual practices and the philosophical hubris of the ancients (pp. 439–40). The question that had initially launched the *devisants'* discussion, however, concerns laughter: "Et qu'est-ce à dire," Oisille had asked, "que nous sommes plus enclins à rire d'une follye, que d'une chose sagement faicte? – Pour ce," replies Hircan, "qu'elle nous est plus agreable, d'autant qu'elle est plus semblable à nostre nature, qui de soy n'est jamais saige" (p. 438). The exchange between Oisille and Hircan here echoes directly the words of Dioneo in the *Decameron*, who, in the translation of Le Maçon, introduces novella 50 (v, 10) as follows: "Je ne scay si je dois dire que ce soit vice accidental, et par la mauvaistié des complexions, qui est survenue entre les mortelz, ou bien si c'est peché en nature, de rire tousjours plustost des mauvaises choses, que des bonnes œuvres."⁷⁴

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church characterized the practice of sodomy as a "sin against nature." Is it a coincidence, then, that in the introduction to *Decameron* v, 10, the reader is presented with the

⁷⁴ *Le Decameron*, p. 139r.

possibility that certain vices are inherent in human nature? Dioneo's vision of humor, that he applies to the wife's conduct in the tale, but that is just as applicable to that of Pietro, inevitably serves to relativize things: in the end, what is and is not of or against nature? In the *Heptaméron*, the erotic passion of a man attracted to youths, a passion that had found a place at the center of the *Decameron*, appears only discreetly and the character of the sodomite disappears. Nonetheless, the subject of sodomy is not entirely suppressed but rather displaced, since it returns in the discussion following the very next story, at the beginning of day 6, associated in an unholy trinity with avarice and cruelty. The discussion of the tale takes place in the light of Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, rather than that of the nature of laughter, which does however appear after *nouvelle* 34, again in conjunction with the Letter to the Romans. Once more, the *Heptaméron* holds up the (wayward) erotic intertext to the Text of the Bible.

Judgment

If the Bible has a unique authority in the *Heptaméron* and is referred to and quoted by all of the *devisants*, this may be more or less appositely, sincerely, or seriously. Nor does citing a passage of Scripture preclude debate over its meaning and application or render any less acute the complex moral and ethical situations depicted. From several points of view, and not merely as a result of its incompleteness, the *Heptaméron* is an open-ended work. In particular, recent critics have stressed its plurivocality and inconclusiveness,⁷⁵ the ways in which it creates "zones d'ombre," multiplying indications of missing information in relation both to the storytellers and to characters in the tales.⁷⁶ The *je* of the authorial narrator, who appears in the second sentence of the prologue, subsequently hands over the recounting of the stories to the characters of the frame story. The *nouvelles* themselves are related to the genre of the *exemplum*, designed to

⁷⁵ See, for example, Lajarte, "L'*Heptaméron*" and "Le Prologue" or Michel Jeanneret, "Modular Narrative and the Crisis of Interpretation," in *Critical Tales*, ed. Lyons and McKinley, pp. 85–103. The same volume also contains an essay by Lajarte that stresses the presence in the *Heptaméron* of a univocal authorial voice: "The Voice of the Narrators in Marguerite de Navarre's Tales," pp. 172–87.

⁷⁶ See André Tournon, "Ignorant les premières causes: jeux d'énigmes dans L'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre," in "L'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre: Actes de la Journée d'Étude Marguerite de Navarre, 19 octobre 1991," ed. Simone Perrier (Cahiers *textuel*) 10 (Paris, 1992), pp. 73–92.

convey a moral teaching, but here the moral to be drawn is almost always the subject of debate, if not disagreement, without the opinion of the narrator or of any other speaker necessarily enjoying a particular privilege. The cumulative pedagogy of the tales is thus a negative one, offering, in the words of John Lyons, “a complex lesson of humility” in which “the *knowledge* of our sinful nature is the goal of exemplary discourse.”⁷⁷ At the same time, however, and as a corollary, the *Heptaméron* constantly calls for the exercise of judgment, soliciting effectively, through its narrative procedures, the reader’s active participation in discerning moral cases and in drawing conclusions for his or her own life. In her storytellers, Marguerite portrays a range of attitudes and opinions that reflect those current around her. By the same token, she also anticipates a range of readers with different views and potential responses, some of whom might be drawn into the work precisely by the way it allows a place to people with whom they might identify and does not depict only the devout and the idealistic. At the same time, as will by now be clear, the religious and moral framework for judgment set up in the *Heptaméron* is a distinctly Christian one and from this point of view, not all the opinions expressed by the storytellers or their protagonists are equally sound; some are polemical and contentions, others more or less immoral—even if they are not subject to authorial censure.⁷⁸

Nouvelle 4, for example, referred to above, portrays a gentleman who, while not presented as intentionally evil, is wrong in thinking that, given the right circumstances, he will be able to overcome the resistance of a princess whom he serves. Having failed in his attempt to force a sexual encounter, the gentleman returns to his room and expresses regret for his actions as he contemplates his scratched and bleeding face in a mirror. In a story recounted by a female *devisant*, Ennasuite, it is hard not to see in this reflective repentance a moral discourse addressed to men inclined to impose their sexual demands on women. When Hircan reacts by accusing the story’s male protagonist of a lack of courage and affirming that he should have taken the lady by force, killing her maidservant if necessary, it is difficult, on the contrary, to imagine that this prescription is being presented as a positive model. Hircan merely represents a particular male

⁷⁷ Lyons, *Exemplum*, pp. 106 and 113. Even the bad conduct of the clerics and religious in the tales can serve this “good” of illustrating human weakness and wickedness.

⁷⁸ Judgment passed through the legal system of justice, a process in which Marguerite herself and her closest relatives were often involved, is also a topic explored in the *Heptaméron*, being foregrounded, for example, in the very first *nouvelle*.

attitude that, as Oisille points out, would not stop at murder in order to satisfy sexual desire. If any (male) reader should find—or in the past might have found—Hircan sympathetic or justified at this point, it is impossible not to recognize that such a position is based on an imposition of male desire through aggression. Women do not always occupy the moral high ground, however, being accused of and sometimes demonstrating, pride, hypocrisy, or dissimulation, characteristics that perhaps point to their general social subordination to men and need to act indirectly in order to exercise influence or power. The reader is called upon to see all this and to draw his or her conclusions.

At the same time, the *Heptaméron* also works to show that it is frequently difficult, if not impossible, to judge definitively between individuals. *Nouvelle* 10, as we have seen, also exposes the latent violence that may undergird the plot of courtly service and seduction. Nonetheless, despite the assault that Amadour finally directs against Floride, readers may find reasons—as do the heroine herself and several of the *devisants*—to retain some degree of sympathy with him.⁷⁹ And even the narrator Parlamente does not present her female protagonist as a perfect model of conduct for women to emulate (cf. pp. 196–98). Even if they exercise good will, then, readers may arrive at differing conclusions, since absolute right and absolute wrong often do not lie uniquely on one side or the other. In the face of the morally complex situations it depicts, the *Heptaméron* offers examples of the exercise of judgment, both well founded and biased, prejudiced, or misguided, but it also reveals the limits of that to which judgment can legitimately pretend. Exercising good judgment must involve the knowledge of when to suspend judgment; the aim is frequently not to convict one person as opposed to another, but to gauge the complexity and morally mixed character of human situations.

This conclusion pertains in circumstances raising not only moral issues but also more specifically religious ones. Story 65, for example, concerns an old woman who, in a dimly lit chapel, mistakes a sleeping soldier for a statue.⁸⁰ Seeking to fix in place a votive candle, she drips molten wax onto the soldier's forehead, causing him to jump to his feet and the woman

⁷⁹ For a reading attentive to the position of Amadour in patriarchal society, see David LaGuardia, "The Voice of the Patriarch in the *Heptaméron* 1:10," *Neophilologus* 81 (1997), 501–13.

⁸⁰ On this *nouvelle* and the question of motivations or intentions, see Miernowski, "L'intentionnalité," and idem, *Signes dissimilaires: La quête des noms divins dans la poésie française de la Renaissance* (Geneva, 1997), pp. 63–89. Cf. Tournon, "'Ignorant. . .'"

to believe she has witnessed a miracle. The discussion of the *devisants* focuses on the question of the value of acts of piety and of credulity, the men being particularly critical of the old woman. Saffredent's appeal to Scripture, in order to argue the necessity of being not only as simple as a dove but also as crafty as a serpent (Matt. 10:16), is nonetheless unconvincing and smacks of point-scoring as grounds for an attack against a generalized "sottise des femmes" (p. 639). Likewise, Hircan asserts misogynously that "il fault *tousjours* que les femmes facent mal" (ibid.). For Oisille, on the contrary, who suggests that the old woman may be like the poor widow in the Gospel of Saint Luke 21:2–4, "[p]eut estre que ceste bonne femme avoit plus d'amour à Dieu, que ceulx qui donnent les grandz torches." *Tousjours / Peut estre*: the polemical intention of the men to discredit all women contrasts with Oisille's more charitable maintenance of doubt. Objectively her position is more Christian and more humane. The *devisants* are at one in condemning superstition and commending true acts of charity, the problem lies in knowing the motivations, the intentions of an individual. In this case, do the old woman's actions reveal a blind and superstitious belief in the efficacy of ritual practices such as lighting a candle or do they express a sincere love of and trust in God? It is hard to read the heart of another, and so, as Oisille reminds the company, "ne fault juger que soy-mesmes" (p. 640).

In this way, the *Heptaméron* calls upon the reader to reflect on the situations described in the stories and to evaluate the arguments of the *devisants*, yet at the same time it shows that it is precisely in judging one's neighbor that one must frequently suspend judgment. The reader is no more able than are the *devisants* to decide one way or another concerning the old woman in *nouvelle* 65. At the same time, this does not mean that superstition and charity become interchangeable in the moral and religious spheres, or that no lesson can be drawn. Rather, the complex play of narration and discussion serves to recall the Christian teaching that every human being will be judged by God and to encourage the reader to reflect on his or her own life and actions. The evangelical message that is conveyed—here and throughout the *Heptaméron*—is that the value of acts of piety, like that of all "good works," lies not in the acts themselves but in the disposition of heart and mind with which they are performed.

From their limited perspective, the lacunae and the open-endedness of the *Heptaméron* reveal, humans can seldom be sure of knowing the "whole story." It is this same principle that Geburon recalls in the very middle of the collection, at the end of day 5, when Oisille expresses her fear that they may run out of material for their tales. Stories, affirms

Geburon, reflect the goodness of the good and the wickedness of the wicked, which fill the world with actions. If it is true that “il n’y a rien nouveau soubz le soleil” (p. 548; cf. Ecclesiastes 1:10), it is no less true that human beings, “ignorans les premieres causes,” are excluded from God’s private council. The Christian, therefore, must exercise judgment, seek to discern good and evil, remaining all the while conscious that no human being can do so infallibly. At the same time, there are religious principles on which it is possible to rely: humanity is fallen and in need of grace; God will have mercy on those who place their faith in him; good works may be a necessary expression of love for God and for neighbor, but all virtue comes from God so that human beings must never trust in their own deeds.

Ending: Word, Spirit, World

Far from standing in opposition to the rest of Marguerite’s work, the *Hep-taméron* expresses a theological and spiritual vision in harmony with that developed in her poems and plays. It is the case that the *Hep-taméron* largely eschews the first-person discourse that conveys an individual spiritual experience, based on a process of purgation or asceticism and movement towards a sentiment of rapture and union with the divine. As we have seen, however, the framed story collection points to the same “prisons” from which the Christian must escape; likewise, from the outside or in the third-person, it depicts certain individuals who undergo an experience of communion with God. The *devisants* themselves collectively share a period of devotional fervor as, on the morning of the eighth day, Oisille teaches with such inspiration that “il sembloit que le Saint Esperit, plain d’amour et de doulceur, parlast par sa bouche. Et, tous enflambez de ce feu, s’en allerent oyr la grand messe” (p. 686). In the stories, however, a sense of oneness with God usually occurs not in prayer but at the moment of death, presented as a moment of amorous consummation. This is the case with the two lovers turned Franciscans in story 19, who, according to the narrator, lived such devout lives

que l’on ne doit doubter que Celluy duquel la fin de la loy est charité, ne leur dist, à la fin de leur vie, comme à la Magdelaine, que leurs pechez leur estoient pardonnez, veu qu’ilz avoient beaucoup aymé, et qu’il ne les retirast en paix ou lieu où la recompense passe tous les merites des hommes. (p. 289)

It is also the case, for Parlamente, with Floride, who, having lived a long life as a Carmelite nun and given her love wholly to God, “luy rendit son

ame en telle joye, que l'espouse a d'aller veoir son espoux" (p. 195). Similarly, the raped muleteer's wife in tale 2 "avecq un visaiqe joyeulx, les oeilz eslevez au ciel, rendit . . . son ame à son Createur" (p. 106).

Like Marguerite's other religious works, the *Heptaméron* also emphasizes the absolute nothingness of all human beings before the all-being of the Creator, the vanity, therefore, of all human works, the fallibility of all human thinking, and the emptiness of human language. The final story of the seventh day in particular develops a profound meditation on this last topic, as human words are given, accepted, or broken in the context of promises between spouses, lovers, and lord and vassal. Throughout *nouvelle* 70, Scriptural allusions point to the lability and unreliability of words, radically subjected to the Word of God, as the tale moves inexorably toward its conclusion, toward the silence of death, anticipated by the silence of prayer, toward such justice as is possible in this world, in expectation of the pronouncement of divine judgment—the Sentence that, from a Christian perspective, awaits everyone and that will conclude the (hi)story of the created world in time.⁸¹

Until then, human life continues in all its multiplicity; individuals, fallen but offered the possibility of ultimate redemption, are shown in the *Heptaméron* pursuing their pilgrimage, some moving closer to God, others turning away from him. And in this respect, it seems fitting that the work was not completed, that it ends rather than concludes, breaking off shortly after the seventh day. How Marguerite might have drawn her collection of stories to closure we cannot know. Some critics discern a projected trajectory of spiritual progress on the part of the *devisants*. It is extremely improbable, however, that Marguerite intended to send her storytellers back into the world, transformed into committed messengers of the gospel, all of them as "mortified" as Oisille. Such idealism would be at odds with the *Heptaméron*'s spiritual anthropology. It is true, as we have noted, that the *devisants* come to share moments of greater religious intensity, but the translation of devotional fervor into spiritual progress and amendment of life is not automatic; it is a long and arduous project. The later days, moreover, are not marked by any diminution of the expression of conflicting points of view. We can imagine the *devisants* leaving, then, the

⁸¹ On *nouvelle* 70 and the meditation on language, see Miernowski, *Signes dissimilaires*, and Gary Ferguson, "Paroles d'hommes, de femmes et de Dieu: Langage, genre et transcendance dans la Nouvelle 70," in *Lire L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Dominique Bertrand (Clermont-Ferrand, 2005), pp. 197–210. See also Nancy Virtue, "Le Saint Esperit . . . parlast par sa bouche: Marguerite de Navarre's Evangelical Revision of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), 811–24.

same people they were when they arrived, but no doubt happy to have spent time together and richer for their experience of exchanging stories and opinions, for having prayed, read the Bible, and taken communion together. Perhaps they would leave with new insights and aspirations—as Marguerite no doubt hoped would also be the case for her reader. But for *devisants* and implied ideal reader alike, the parting challenge would be that of putting good intentions into practice in daily life.

The biblical texts on which the storytellers meditate point to a similar conclusion. The reading of Romans during the first five days gives way to that of the First Letter of Saint John on the sixth day, the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles on the seventh day, with a return to Saint John on day 8, projected to be continued for the remainder of the stay (cf. pp. 549, 611, and 685–86). This division between the Letter to the Romans and the First Letter of John, punctuated by the opening chapters of Acts, is suggestive in a number of ways. First, the seventh day (irrespective of what day of the week it might be) is marked within the temporal economy of the *Heptaméron* as a Sabbath. This Day of the Lord is also a Day of the Spirit, both by virtue of the story of Pentecost that opens the Acts of the Apostles—and which is also the story of the beginning of the Christian Church—and by virtue of the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit that the *devisants* attend with the canons (p. 611).⁸² Second, while Romans covers many topics, it treats notably of the pre-Christian era—the value of both ancient pagan philosophy (cf. above) and of the Jewish Law, for Christians the Old Covenant—and of salvation through faith in the sacrifice of Christ, the New Adam. When Oisille moves subsequently to 1 John, she does so because this Letter “n’est plaine que d’amour” (p. 549). In his First Letter, the evangelist does indeed describe God as love, reminding the early Christian community that God loved them while they were still sinners and that they must therefore return his love and also show love to one another. Here again, then, the *Heptaméron* points to the challenge for the Christian of living in the present in a fallen, imperfect world, but one into which God has sent his Word, that is his Son, and his Spirit, offering, through grace, the gifts of faith and charity, living, that is, between Redemption and Judgment, in humble trust in God’s mercy and in joyful hope of the life of the world to come.

⁸² See Miernowski, *Signes dissimilaires*.

Posterity and Religious Polemic

In the decades following Marguerite's death and the publication of the *Heptaméron*, her book was mined by its readers. As her stories migrated, they were often reworked and appropriated by writers of different confessional stripes for their own ends. We know little about what happened to the work in the years between her death and the appearance of the editions of Boaistuau in 1558 and Gruget in 1559. Before those printed versions appeared, various manuscripts were circulating. Matteo Bandello (1485–1561), a Dominican whom the vagaries of history led from Lombardy to a bishopric in Agen, a city in French Navarre, wrote over 200 novellas in Italian, at least nine of which are very similar to stories in the *Heptaméron*.⁸³ Some of Bandello's tales were translated during his lifetime by the same Boaistuau. He gave the French collection the title *Histoires tragiques*, and a new narrative genre was born.⁸⁴ Soon thereafter, another writer from the southwest, François de Belleforest, took over the *Histoires tragiques* and added many tales.

Bandello's story 24 in Part II of his collection corresponds in its basic plot to *nouvelle* 23 in the *Heptaméron*, the story of the Franciscan who replaces the husband of a woman in their bed soon after she has given birth, leading to her suicide and the deaths of her infant and husband. Bandello's version is much longer, however, and his emphasis is different from Marguerite's. Oisille gives above all a moral lesson. She devotes a good portion of her story to the friar's corrupt character, showing his deceit and hypocrisy through direct discourse and by her comments. She follows the mother's anguished thoughts leading to her suicide and shows how they are misguided theologically. Finally, her story is framed by remarks that warn against putting too much trust in Franciscans: she opens with the husband's naive and indiscriminating devotion to Saint Francis, such that "il luy sembloit que tous ceulx qui portoient son habit

⁸³ After debates about whose stories came first, Bandello's or Marguerite's, there is now general agreement that Bandello heard or read an early version of Marguerite's stories. For a comparison of the two tales discussed below, see Marie-François Piéjus, "Marguerite de Navarre et Bandello: une même histoire tragique, deux leçons, deux poétiques," in *Du Pô à la Garonne: Recherches sur les échanges culturels entre l'Italie et la France à la Renaissance*, ed. Jean Cubelier de Beynac and Michel Simonin (Agen, 1990), pp. 209–30, and K. H. Hartley, *Bandello and the Heptaméron* (Melbourne, 1960).

⁸⁴ Pierre Boaistuau, *Histoires tragiques*, ed. Richard A. Carr (Paris, 1977). See Hervé Campagne, "Marguerite de Navarre and the Invention of the *Histoire Tragique*," in *Approaches to Teaching*, ed. Winn, pp. 91–96.

devoient estre semblables au bon saint" (p. 342); she ends by telling the women to beware "de tels pelerins" (p. 351). Bandello, the friar and bishop, also portrays the Franciscan's evil deeds, but he attenuates the anticlerical criticism by cautioning readers not to assume that the friar represents all the members of his order. He also presents him with a degree of sympathy as the victim of Love and attributes his lubricity to the devil. Bandello's friar thus comes closer to being a tragic figure than a villain.

If Bandello mitigated the anticlerical satire of *Heptaméron* 23, the great Hellenist and lexicographer Henri Estienne (1531–98), an unequivocal supporter of the Reformation, intensified it. Estienne published his *Apologie pour Hérodote* in Geneva in 1566, a work that had grown well beyond its original design of introducing Lorenzo Valla's translation of Herodotus to become a virulent attack on the Roman Catholic Church. In Part I, chapter 18, "Des homicides de nostre temps," Estienne refers to women who have committed suicide after being raped or dishonored through trickery; it is here that he introduces Marguerite's story 23:

Aussi lisons-nous és narrations de la roine de Navarre derniere defuncte, la piteuse mort d'une demoiselle, qui se pendit et estrangla pour le grand despit et regret qu'elle avoit de ce qu'un cordelier avoit usé d'elle comme de sa femme, sans que elle pensast estre couchee pres autre que son mari: laquelle histoire sera recitee plus au long ci-apres, où nous traiterons des paillardises des gens d'eglise.⁸⁵

In Part I, chapter 21, "De la lubricité et paillardise des gens d'église," Estienne excoriates the practice of priests taking concubines. He adds: "Mais ne se contentans de leurs concubines ou putains, ils ont aussi par subtil moyens abusé des femmes honnestes. Pour exemple dequoy est racontée par la feu roine de Navarre une histoire fort memorable et fort tragique, dont j'ay deliberé de faire le récit..." (p. 535). If Estienne retells the *Heptaméron*'s story 23 fairly faithfully, by introducing it in a chapter about the lustfulness of clerics, he uses it to support his anti-Catholic stance in the *Apologie*. In all the stories that he adapts from the *Heptaméron*, Estienne takes the prologue at its word and presents them not as fiction but as fact, as *veritables histoires*.

Nouvelle 67, the tale of the woman abandoned with her husband on an island in the Saint Lawrence by Roberval during his 1542 expedition,

⁸⁵ Henri Estienne, *Traité Preparatif à l'Apologie pour Hérodote*, ed. Bénédicte Boudou, 2 vols. (Geneva, 2007), p. 503.

also enjoyed several reincarnations. In Marguerite's version, the plot is stark and the characters remain anonymous as their tale conveys a moral lesson. Simontault emphasizes the woman's unwavering faith in God, a trust rewarded by her eventual rescue and return to France. She becomes an evangelical *exemplum* of God's providence and mercy. Belleforest, in 1570, and André Thevet, in 1575 and again in 1586–88, wrote much longer accounts of the episode, making the woman the sister of Roberval. Thevet named her Marguerite and claimed to have received the tale from the woman herself. In relation to the *Heptaméron's* version, Belleforest and Thevet, both Catholics, add many exotic details to the story and dilute the evangelical message.⁸⁶

A dynamic of confessional appropriation or inflection affected even some versions of the *Heptaméron* itself. The text's first editors Boaistuau and Gruget introduced many modifications, the latter in particular altering or eliminating passages that might be considered sensitive from a Catholic perspective. Among many other changes, for example, Gruget omits from the prologue Oisille's comments concerning superstitious beliefs about the Virgin Mary, as well as the hypocrisy of the abbot of Serance; the long condemnation of the false teaching of the Franciscans in *nouvelle* 23 is also suppressed.⁸⁷ The opposite can be observed in a manuscript of the *Heptaméron* held by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, MS 242, apparently produced after the Gruget edition, perhaps as late as 1570. The 1560s saw the beginning of the Wars of Religion in France, and Pierpont Morgan 242 injects into the *Heptaméron* the strident timber of those years, systematically escalating its anticlerical tone. In story 31 of the friar who murdered three servants and abducted the wife, instead of the word *cordelier*, the scribe wrote "ce dyable de Cordellier" and "ce paillard Cordellier." After killing the servants, the friar returns to the unsuspecting wife "eschauffé et en son habit de meschanceté," an added description

⁸⁶ See Michel Bideaux, *Roberval, la damoiselle et le gentilhomme: les Robinsons de Terre-Neuve* (Paris, 2009). Bideaux has edited and analyzed the 16th-century versions of the legend. Noting that no archival documentation exists to authenticate the historical basis of the tale, he concludes: "Ces textes dialoguent entre eux; ils n'ont pas de comptes (ni de contes) à rendre à la réalité" (p. 111). See also Frank Lestringant, "La Demoiselle dans l'île: Prolégomènes à une lecture de la Nouvelle 67," in *Lire L'Heptaméron*, ed. Bertrand, pp. 183–96, and Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago, 2003), pp. 225–64.

⁸⁷ See ed. Cazauran and Lefèvre, pp. 56, 61, and 291.

that appears in none of the earlier manuscripts or editions.⁸⁸ The pun on the word “habit,” meaning both religious habit and “habitudes, instincts . . . coutumes, mœurs,” is particularly caustic.⁸⁹

Coda: Return to Cauterets

When Marguerite visited Cauterets for the last time in May 1549, only months before her death, the collection of stories she was writing and had set in and around the town must have been very much in her mind. During her stay, she also composed an Ascension Day meditation in the form of a verse epistle addressed to her son-in-law.⁹⁰ For the Christian, Jesus's ascension represents the promise of rising also to heaven, the hope of the future divinization of human nature, after, however, the completion of the time allotted by God to the present created order. As she contemplated her physical surroundings, Marguerite responded imaginatively and emotionally to the landscape of this part of her kingdom, reading it in a way inflected by her reading of the Psalms. The great heights of the mountain peaks and the thunderous force of the waters of the *gave de Pau* inspired in her admiration of the created world and of the power of the divine Creator who holds all things in his hand, governing them and maintaining them in being. The depths of the turbulent river also recalled, for her, humanity's sinfulness, “la laydeur / De nostre enfer et de nostre péché / Qui tient le cuer si tres bas attaché.” Unless, then, the Creator reform our hearts by his same all-powerful hand, no hope remains: “À ceste main [n]ous fault tousjours tyrer / En ferme foy que de sa creature / Aura pitié, cognoissant sa nature.”⁹¹ Marguerite moves next, however, to a number of physical, worldly, and personal concerns. The baths, with their healing waters, are also a sign of God's goodness. The queen expresses her desire to see her son-in-law soon. Her daughter's love for him, she claims, is so strong that even the waters can bring her no relief

⁸⁸ Nicole Cazauran gives many examples of changes to the *Heptaméron* in the manuscript, “Post-scriptum à propos d'un manuscrit: New York, Pierpont Morgan Library 242,” in *Marguerite de Navarre, 1492–1992*, ed. Cazauran and Dauphiné, pp. 483–90.

⁸⁹ Algirdas Julien Greimas and Teresa Mary Keane, *Dictionnaire du moyen français* (Paris, 1992), p. 341.

⁹⁰ “Ses montz tres haultz haulsent notre desir,” also referred to as “Épître de Cauterets.” Marguerite's daughter Jeanne d'Albret had been married to Antoine de Bourbon in October 1548.

⁹¹ Quoted from Gorris Camos, “‘Ses montz . . .,’” p. 176, with a correction from BnF, fr. 883, fol. 31r.

from the suffering caused by his absence. Marguerite hopes their hearts may ever be joined in mutual love, that their union will bear fruit in the form of a child, that she, before her death, may know the joy—in the event unrealized—of being a grandmother.⁹² This is Marguerite's Cauterets, the world of the *Heptaméron*.

⁹² Jeanne and Antoine's son, the future Henri IV of France, was born only in 1553.

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